The case for democracy in church government : a study in the Reformed tradition with special reference to the Congregationalism of Robert William Dale, Peter Taylor Forsyth, Albert Peel and Nathaniel Micklem.

Norwood, Donald W

CORRIGENDA

Page	
15	Frankfurt to Frankfort as in title of book
27 n 2	Jean Baptiste Morèly add 't'
27 n 4	Aristole was translated into latin c 1260, not 1215
49	against synods add ' t '
75	andf delete 'f'
89	taking assemblies correct to talking assemblies
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134	authority is now correct to authority is not
148	Leyland Carlson, correct to Leland Carlson
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189	Laymans' Church correct to Layman's Church
193	Insert footnote 5 BW April 9th 1942 p 17
205	that latter correct to the latter
239	the correct to that democracy means government by
248	close inverted commas after Ganoczy
250	trades unions correct to trade unions
263	Christ and the Controversies add 'of' Christendom
272	Savoy Declaration 1659 correct to 1658
102	of the Chapel correct to if the Chapel had some..

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LONDON

THE CASE FOR DEMOCRACY IN CHURCH GOVERNMENT: A STUDY IN THE REFORMED TRADITION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CONGREGATIONALISM OF ROBERT WILLIAM DALE, PETER TAYLOR FORSYTH, ALBERT PEEL AND NATHANIEL MICKLEM.

ABSTRACT

Many have noted the contribution of the Reformed Churches to political democracy. Few have asked what their spokesmen thought about democracy within the Church.

Calvin's use of the classical model of a mixed constitution of Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy, and his preference for Aristocracy tempered by Democracy, provoked a debate within the Church as to how each aspect should be interpreted. The participants include Morély, Viret, Blondellus and Bellarmine as well as many English Independents and Presbyterians.

Dale, Forsyth, Peel and Micklem wrote extensively about our subject and have become recognised spokesmen for English Congregationalism 1850-1972. The wider contexts of denominational thinking and ecumenical discussion are examined, and links noted with Hatch, Gore, Maurice, Sabatier, Roland Allen and others. The Minutes of Church Meetings to which Dale, Forsyth and Peel ministered are also studied although the emphasis of the thesis is on theory rather than practice.

Dale revived the idea of government by discussion which to Micklem is what democracy is all about. Forsyth rediscovered Calvin and the principle of Christ's authority to check notions of natural democracy. Peel has great respect for Forsyth but reverts to an advocacy of freedom. The four together can present a balanced case for democracy in Church government.

The final chapter returns to the opening theme of a debate within the whole Church. Forsyth interpreted the concept of a mixed polity ecumenically. Episcopacy, Presbyterianism and the 'Democratic Churches' are complementary. A study that was spurred on by reading Catholic theologians like Newman and Congar ends with brief comments from Ganoczy, Rahner and Küng. The arguments for democracy in Church government are presented and then the debate is adjourned.

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CONTENTS

BW	British Weekly
CD	Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics
CM	Congregational Monthly
CQ	Congregational Quarterly
CUEW	Congregational Union of England and Wales
CW	Christian World
CYB	Congregational Year Book
DNB	Dictionary of National Biography
ed.	editor / edited.
ET	English Translation
ICC	International Congregational Council
Institution	John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (1559)
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
JURCHS	Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society
Lond.	Published in London
ND	No date of publication
NP	No place of publication
TCHS	Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society
TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
URC	United Reformed Church
WCC	World Council of Churches

GLOSSARY

Church Meeting - the Meeting of the members of a Congregational/United Reformed Church, exercising authority over the life of a local church.

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INTRODUCTION

This study grew out of a general interest in lay people in the Church in the days of the ecumenical rediscovery of the laity.[1] I focused my attention on the understanding of the laity in the Congregational Church but was overtaken by events. That Church recovered its Reformed roots with the English Presbyterians and ceased to be. Most of its members became part of the United Reformed Church in England and Wales in 1972. They did so after persuading the Presbyterians that Church Meetings, in which all the members of local congregation have a regular share in the government of the Church, were a gift of God. Other ecumenical experience, both more general and more local, has confirmed the conviction that the case for democracy in the Church can be made, needs to be understood, and should be heard.

The World Council of Churches pioneered a survey of The Layman in Christian History.[2] Despite the commendable anxiety, evident in the 1960's, not to clericalise the laity but to affirm their ministry in the world, it was clear that the layman had also to be seen as Churchman. The question then becomes 'What share do the laity have in the government of the Church?'

1 In 1948, the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches established a committee on 'The Significance of the Laity in the Church'. The Second Assembly in 1954 created a'Department on the Laity'. In 1957 the first English edition of a French Roman Catholic study Jalons pour une Théologie du Laïcat appeared, Lay People in the Church, Yves Congar, ET revised edition, London 1965. See also Vatican II, the Christian Layman, edited by Jeremiah Newman, Dublin 1966. A Reformed response to Congar is Hendrik Kraemer, A Theology of the Laity, Hulsean Lectures, London 1958.

2 Stephen Neill and Hans-Ruedi Weber, editors, The Layman in Christian History, London 1963

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The word 'democracy' occurs with surprising frequency in discussions of Church government despite the equally frequent rejoinders that the Church is not a democracy. Indeed, Geoffrey Nuttall once noted that 'democracy' was used in ecclesiastical discussions before it became part of the vocabulary of English politics.[1] This is not therefore an example of the Church trying hard to be relevant by using the fashionable slogans of the day.

Many writers from many different traditions have acknowledged the debt that modern political democracy owes either to the Reformed Churches in general or to the English Independent congregations in particular. A good example is James Hastings Nichols, Democracy and the Churches (1951).[2] This work was commissioned by a small group of Church leaders under the chairmanship of John Mott. It gives a balanced survey of the contribution and attitude of all major confessions to democracy. Only what Nichols calls 'the Puritan tradition' has been consistently affiliated with political democracy.

Very few people have stopped to ask what it is about the constitution of Reformed Churches that makes them so pro-democratic. Even an article in the Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society on 'The Survival of the Church Meeting' (1971) was a novelty.[3] In seventy years no one had previously investigated an institution which Congregationalists often regard as the epitome of their

1 Geoffrey F. Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience, Oxford 1947, p. 120

2 Democracy and the Churches, Philadelphia 1951, esp. pp 9, 17, 133, 238f. Nichols himself belongs to 'the Puritan tradition'.

3 John Taylor, 'The Survival of the Church Meeting, 1691 - 1901', TCHS, Vol. XXI, No. 2, December 1971, pp. 31-44.

3r Churchmanship and the two hundred years surveyed in the article showed that this lack of interest was nothing new.

In 1944 Daniel Jenkins wrote The Church Meeting and Democracy and apologised for a little book on a big subject about which no big book existed. [1] Were he writing today he might acknowledge Paul M. Harrison's Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition (1959) as a big enough study, in this instance of 'Baptist Democracy' in the American Baptist Convention. [2] Harrison's perspective is primarily sociological but includes comment from theologians like P.T.Forsyth. His research gives a good illustration of how illusions about the practicality of direct democracy beyond the local congregation may conceal the realities of power held by the officials of a denomination.

In some recent studies of seventeenth century ecclesiology quite explicit attention is given to democracy in Church government. A notable example is Stephen Brachlow, Puritan Theology and Radical Churchmen (1978) which has sections on 'Government of the Gathered Church: Democracy and Aristocracy'. [3] Where the distinction between these two forms of government becomes too confused, R.W.Dale is called upon to elucidate the past and to explain how, in the nature of the delicate relationship between minister and people in a Congregational church, a clearcut demarcation between ministerial and popular authority becomes impossible. [4]

1 The Church Meeting and Democracy, London 1944, one of a series of 'Forward Books' edited by John Marsh and reflecting the concerns of the Congregational Church Order Group.

2 Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition, Princeton 1959, esp. Chapter VIII on 'Baptist Democracy'

3 Puritan Theology and Radical Churchmen, unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford 1978, pp. 46f., 94f., 154f.

4 Brachlow, ibid, p. 164; R.W.Dale, History of English Congregationalism, London 1908, pp. 207-9

4r Such studies partly reflect contemporary interest in questions of democracy and participation. We find in the past things that seem important to us now, or feel that Church practices must respond to events. The danger of the latter is perhaps more evident among those who lack the Reformed inheritance of democratic methods. Hans Küng's democratic tract, Why Priests?(ET 1972), bases much of its argument on the insights of the French Revolution.[1] This would have horrified Forsyth and not been understood by a French Reformed Churchman and democrat, Edmond de Pressensé,who lived much nearer to this event and wrote a very careful study on The Church and the French Revolution (ET 1869).[2] The Church of England in the last century was certainly under pressure to respond to events. Changes in the composition of Parliament meant that it no longer represented the laity - or did it? Even in 1927-8,when Parliament rejected the Prayer Book measure, there were those who claimed that Parliament was more representative of the average Anglican than the Church Assembly.[3] Earlier, in the age of Dale, the Church of England was experimenting with Church Congresses and seriously debating the merits and disadvantages of replacing patronage with the popular election of clergy. Much to the intense annoyance of Dissenters failures in some of these experiments were attributed to 'congregation--alism'.[4] Michael John Roberts, The Role of the Laity in the Church

1 Hans Küng, Why Priests? (1971), ET London 1972, pp. 15f 'Democratisation in the Church?; pp. 20-23, 'Freedom, Equality, Fraternity'. But his discussion of leadership, democratic structures etc is much more Biblically based in pp. 72-6.

2 Edmond de Pressensé, 1824-1895,was born in Paris and ministered in Paris. Memoires de l'Académie des Sciences de l'Institut de France, Tome XIX, Paris 1896, pp. 177-225. His work is referred to by Alexander Mackennal and in Dale's History. For him the French Revolution posed issues of Church and State.

3 Church and State, Church Information Office, London 1970, pp. 15-16.

4 See, for example, Alexander Mackennal's CUEW Chairman's Address in CYB, 1887/8, p. 34

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of England c. 1850-1885 (1974) gives a very detailed account of these preludes to Parochial Church Councils and Synodical Government. It shows also that there were Anglicans who felt there was much to be learned from the Nonconformists. [1] This is not always the case. In 1932, W.G.Peck, a leading member of the Christendom Group, does listen to past criticisms of a clericalised church, bishops who are not elected, etc, but he feels that Nonconformists are such individualists that they have nothing to teach Anglicans about democracy in the Church. [2]

It is some consolation to learn that Peck was once a Methodist. Methodists, according to Dale, tended not to be Churchmen, and for all their reputation for lay preachers were very reluctant to give the laity a full and equal share in the government of the Church. A study of this kind cannot hope to do justice to all other major denominations. In this instance it is perhaps news to many who think that everyone who is not Anglican or Roman is simply Free Church that even in 1932 the 'Pastoral supremacy' in the Methodist Conference was 'unparalleled by any Nonconformist community'. [3] Methodists had not lived down that famous, or notorious,remark of Jabez Bunting in 1827: 'Methodism was as much opposed to democracy as to sin'. [4]

1 Michael John Roberts, The Role of the Laity in the Church of England, Unpublished Oxford D.Phil thesis, Oxford 1974, esp. pp. 91, 132. Anglicans envied the energy of the the Nonconformist laity.

2 W.G.Peck, Reunion and Nonconformity, London 1932, pp. 8, 28, 68f., 117. For his own comments on democracy see Peck, The Social Implications of the Oxford Movement, New York 1933. For background to Peck and the Christendom Group that was very interested in democracy see John Oliver, The Church and the Social Order, London 1968; Peter Mayhew, The Christendom Group, Unpublished Oxford M.Litt thesis, Oxford 1977.

3 Robert Currie, Methodism Divided, London 1968, p. 165. Lay people were not admitted to Conference until 1877.

4 ibid, p. 43. Bunting was John Wesley's successor

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Methodists, like Anglicans, hesitated longest on the question of lay participation in discussion of doctrine. Edward Pusey felt laymen had no place in Church synods.[1] This provides a very interesting contrast with John Henry Newman, by now a Roman Catholic, and a fellow minister in Dale's Birmingham. In 1859 he published a courageous and controversial article, 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine'.[2] Newman explained, of course,than to consult did not mean to submit to but the basic thesis was what many Dissenters sincerely believed: the faithful had often proved more faithful than the bishops. As Owen Chadwick (Anglican) comments on Newman:

> 'Despite the feeling for structure, and hierarchy and authority, he had a view of the nature of the Church in which the common man, the peasant, the housewife in the pew, mattered very much.

Deep in the corporate mind of ordinary people is 'a true intuition of what the Church is about'.[3]

Dale, as I shall note later, valued Newman's opinion on his book The Atonement. Dale and Peel and Forsyth had enormous respect for Charles Gore. Micklem and William Temple each thought very highly of the other. Such a study as this has to begin in this ecumenical context for this was the setting in which Dale, Forsyth, Peel and Micklem worked. This is also the Reformed tradition if we accept the view that Calvin's basic

1 Michael Roberts, The Role of the Laity.., p. 242f Pusey thought that in the Early Church laymen were represented by the bishops in whose election they participated.

2 Newman's article was first published in The Rambler 1859. It was reissued in 1871, the year after the First Vatican Council, and reprinted in 1961, with notes and editing by John Coulson, Geoffrey Chapman, London 1961. Ibid (1961), p. 75 Newman argues that Athanasius would have failed without the support of the faithful laity.

3 Owen Chadwick, Newman, Oxford 1983, pp. 42-3

7r intention was to reform the Church Catholic. This is not to claim that the four Congregational spokesmen in this study were each thoroughly ecumenical. Two were, two were not.[1] The division of opinion is one justification for their selection as representative interpreters of a moderately catholic tradition.

Peel, Micklem, Forsyth and Dale may seem to some a strange quartet. But if one can imagine a debate in progress on 'Democracy in the Congregational Church' then these four, it could be agreed, made the most significant contributions. Two of them, Peel and Micklem, wrote books on Christian Democracy. Forsyth rarely misses an opportunity to ask fashionable democrats some searching questions. These three have a common respect for Dale. Micklem was Principal of the College that Dale helped to establish in Oxford. Contemporaries could see they differed. Dale and Forsyth took part in the Leicester discussions about the basis of religious communion but on different sides.[2] Peel and Micklem were deliberately chosen to express their different emphasises for an international statement on Congregationalism, and to share in the search for unity with the Presbyterians. To be consistent with our subject each must be heard in his own right but no decision taken until all four have spoken.

Wherever possible I have tried to note the views of their own contemporaries and tried to outline the ideas that shaped their

1 Even this begs the question of what we mean by ecumenical - spiritual unity or organic union, or the federation that Forsyth is thought to commend.

2 This was in 1877 in Forsyth's very unorthodox phase. See below, chapter on Forsyth.

convictions. In three instances theory has been measured against actual practice of Church government, so far as this is disclosed in the Minutes of Church Meetings. This study is, however, more concerned with arguments for some form of democracy in Church government than with producing evidence that the theory works. There is an overlapping here and also on the distinction between advocating democracy in politics and democracy in Church polity. It has therefore seemed relevant to note, for example, what Dale thought about the 1867 Reform Bill or the question of votes for women.

Studies like this have their own personal motivation. Mine has two. My father was a Congregational minister who suffered more than once from bad Church Meetings. I now work in an Ecumenical Parish where most of the lay leadership seems to come from the Reformed rather than the Anglican tradition. The first experience never shook a basic confidence that God seeks to work in partnership with all the people of the Church, treating all as sons and not mere servants, expected to acquiesce quietly to decisions made by others. The second does not make me complacent but only reinforces the conviction, so passionately expressed in Forsyth and Micklem, of the burden of responsibility on the Reformed tradition for encouraging the growth in maturity of all the People of God. To Micklem and Forsyth it was also desperately obvious that Congregationalism was only one facet of the whole Church Catholic. That is why this study must now begin with that Catholic Churchman, John Calvin.

REFORMATION DEBATES

The process of democracy is debate. It was by this method that many sought to reform not only the faith but also the polity of the Church. Calvin in particular had raised the question of Church order. For the next hundred years, from Geneva to New England, through Europe and Old England, the people's part in Church government, democracy in the Church, was strenuously debated.

Appeal could be made on all sides to a common inheritance of Scripture, Tradition and the experience of the Church in different ages and in varied societies. What, for example, was the meaning of Acts 14,23, and was it the norm for all later Church practice? And when, as all could agree, there had been tumultuous elections in the past, was this an argument against democracy in the Church or simply a warning of possible abuse?

In the end, or at least for their era, the various protagonists could not agree. The debate was adjourned. But some agreement there had to be if there were to be any governing of the Church at all. What emerged was a range of different reforming programmes from an hierarchical church still under the Papacy to meetings of the Society of Friends . In England there were many who looked to Geneva and 'the example of the best Reformed churches', and three and four centuries later, in the age of Dale, Forsyth, Peel and Micklem, Calvin himself would still be the subject of much heated debate.

Congregationalism does not have 'Founding Fathers', no real equivalent of a Martin Luther or a John Wesley, but it does have a 'Patrology'. This was the term used by Grieve to describe Peel's life work on Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts.[1] All four of our spokesmen were profoundly interested in their history. Dale wrote the History of English Congregationalism. He said nothing about Calvin's reforms, much about Luther who would have implemented some form of Congregationalism had this been practicable.[2] The silence about Calvin is exceptional and in his later years Dale had second thoughts.[3] Forsyth said that Independency, like democracy, had two roots: one was the Anabaptists, the other, Calvin.[4] Peel, although he considered that Micklem and those whom Grant[5] calls 'the Genevans' spoke too much about Calvin, did not deny he was one of the formative influences. In his own A Brief History of English Congregationalism he acknowledges the influence of Protestant refugees from Europe, and the experience of English Churchmen exiled in cities like Strasburg, Frankfurt and Geneva. He interprets A Brief Discourse of the Troubles at Frankfurt 1554-8,[6] 'troubles' on which Calvin's advice was sought, as showing in microcosm the 'discussion which was to be transplanted to England when Elizabeth came to the throne'.[7]

1 Albert Peel and Leland Carlson, editors, Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts, London 1953-70

2 Completed and edited by A.W.W.Dale, London 1907, p.43

3 Dale in 1891 said that he broke with Calvinism soon after entering the ministry but that he now saw it as a useful corrective to modern thought. The International Congregational Council, Authorised Record of Proceedings, London 1891, p. xxxi; Albert Peel and Douglas Horton, International Congregationalism, London 1949, pp. 17-18

4 P.T.Forsyth, Faith, Freedom and the Future (1912), London 1955

5 John W Grant, Free Churchmanship in England, 1870-1940, London N.D., c 1954, pp 325f

6 A Brief Discourse.., attributed to William Whittingham(1575), edited by Edward Arber, Fellow of King's College, London, London 1907,

7 Albert Peel, A Brief History.. , London 1931, p.21

Receiving advice is not the same as following it and it is important to realise that some of the early Congregationalists, while being conscious of the importance of Calvin, felt free to disagree with him. Henry Barrow when asked in 1587 if he had read Calvin and Beza and other writers said that he had read 'more than enough' and he gave as his verdict:

> 'I gladly acknowledge him a painful and profitable instrument, in the things that he saw, and times he served in, yet not without his many errors and ignorances, especially touching the planting, government and ordering of the church of Christ : and no marvel, for being so nearly escaped out of the smoky furnace of popery, he could not so suddenly see or attain, unto the perfect beauty of Zion'.[1]

And John Owen, whom some would regard as a spokesman of 'classic Congregationalism, and whose writings have informed the 'High Church' Congregationalism of the twentieth century,[2][3] said that since the death of the apostles there was scarcely anyone equal to Calvin yet on some things he thought entirely differently.[4] In the light of such comments one need not feel too nervous about the outcome of the continuing debate among historians on whether Calvin was at all democratic.[5] Calvin could be wrong.

1 L H Carlson, editor, The Writings of Henry Barrow, 1587-90, Lond 1962 p 96 (Barrow's First Examination 19th Nov. 1587); p 287 from 'A Brief Discovery of a False Church', Dordrecht 1590. There are frequent references to Calvin in Barrow.

2 Peel, Christian Freedom, Lond 1938, was critical of those who spoke of 'classic' Congregationalism' p 42

3 See W J Hurtable's Introduction to his edition of John Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church , London 1947 ; Nathaniel Micklem, Congregationalism and the Church Catholic, Lond 1943, pp 42f.

4 Cited in Geoffrey F Nuttall, Visible Saints , Oxford, 1957 p 143 n 1. Nuttall says that in this Owen can speak for others as well as himself.

5 See, for example, J W Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, (1928), Lond 1960, p 66 ; Basil Hall in Courtenay Studies in Reformation Theology, I , Calvin edited by G E Duffield, Abingdon, 1966, p 32; Harro Höpfl, The Christian Polity of John Calvin , Cambridge 1982 pp 124f, 157f, 205. Still useful is G.P.Gooch, English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century, 2nd edition, edited by H.J.Laski, Cambridge 1927, pp. 3-7 on Calvin.

Nonetheless, it is a great bonus to have Calvin on your side. It helps to establish a claim to be included in the 'Reformed Churches', a status as important to many Independents in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries[1] as it is to some Congregationalists in the twentieth.[2] The Presbyterians have no monopoly of Calvin.[3] He is a Church Father whose ecumenical significance is once more being acknowledged, not least in the Church of Rome.[4] Calvin set out to reform the Church Catholic:

> 'he claimed to be doing no more than restoring the face of the early church as one cleanses an old painting of disfiguring varnish'.[5]

If part of that reform was to give back to the people some real share in the government of the Church, the case for democracy in the whole Church has a very respectable, and respected, advocate. The Roman Catholic 'controversialist', Cardinal Bellarmine, though he disagreed, took Calvin's views very seriously. In turn, he provoked John Owen into writing one of the key works on Congregational Churchmanship, The True Nature of a Gospel Church (1689). Thus even towards the end of the seventeenth century the debate about Church order was still with Rome.[6] Canterbury is also included.

1 See, for example, John Norton, The Answer (1648) translated and edited by Douglas Horton, Harvard 1958, p. 5. Norton fears 'the division of the Reformed into Presbyterian and Congregationalist or Independent'.

2 John W Grant, Free Churchmanship in England, Preface p. 5 'the Reformed heritage', the 'Reformed tradition'.

3 A point made by Basil Hall, Calvin, 1966, p. 22; J M Ross, Presbyterian Bishops? (1952), London 1957, p. 9

4 Lewis S Mudge, One Church: Catholic and Reformed, London 1963. Most notable among RC scholars is Alexandre Ganoczy, Professor of Theology at Würzburg, 1972–, author of Calvin und Vaticanum II, Das Problem der Kollegialitat, Wiesbaden 1965; Le Jeune Calvin, Wiesbaden 1966; Ecclesia Ministrans, Dienende Kirche und Kirchlicher Dienst bei Calvin, Freiburg/Basel 1968; Amt und Apostolizitat, zur Theologie des Kirchlichen Amtes bei Calvin auf dem Hintergrund der Gegenwärtigen Ökumenische Diskussion, Wiesbaden 1975; Barth on Ganoczy, Letters (1981) p. 214

5 Basil Hall, 'Calvin against the Calvinists', in Calvin (1966) p. 20

6 See below.

Daniel Jenkins (Congregationalist), very much the Reformed Churchman, said that if Calvin were to come to England today and look around for a church to join, 'he would, with some misgivings, throw in his lot with the Anglo-Catholics'.[1] Would these 'misgivings' touch our subject? Does that Reformed tradition which has been so closely associated with the growth of political democracy really go back to Calvin himself?

Calvin did not come to Geneva in 1536 with a ready made political or ecclesiastical programme.[2] But it was singularly Providential that it was to Geneva that he was persuaded, by Farel and others, to come.[3] The city had already, after several public debates, voted itself into the Reformation.[4] It had a tradition of citizen participation, not to say riot, and a civil guard, re-formed in 1491, with the motto 'what touches one touches all',[5] a tag not unlike that still quoted by Catholic writers as one argument for democracy in the Church.[6] There was an ecclesiastical vacuum for the alien, prince-bishop had fled: 'the bishop had fled and had left Geneva to democracy and chaos', or should we say 'to democracy and to Calvin'? The first was Canon Curteis brusk summary in his Bampton Lectures on Dissent;[7] the other is more in line with John Whale's (Congregationalist) account: 'Calvin perceived that the great need in the sixteenth century was a positive ecclesiastical polity'.[8]

1 Daniel Jenkins, The Gift of the Ministry, London 1947, p. 88 One may note that the Presbyterian authority on Calvin, Basil Hall, was ordained deacon and priest in the Church of England 1970-1. See also, John Whale, Christian Doctrine (1941), 1957, p. 143

2 Harro Höpfl, Polity of John Calvin, 1982, pp. 54-7

3 For general background-François Wendel, Calvin (1950) ET, Fontana, London 1965 is still highly commended by Hall; T H L Parker, John Calvin, a Biography, London 1975; Benjamin Charles Milner, Calvin's Doctrine of the Church, Leiden 1970.

4 William Monter, Calvin's Geneva, New York 1967, pp51,53-4, 56

5 ibid, p. 34. See also Basil Hall, The Reformation City, Manch 1971

6 Yves Congar, Lay People in the Church, ET London 1965, p. 250

7 George H Curteis, Dissent in its Relation to the Church of England, London 1874, p. 47

8 John S Whale, The Protestant Tradition, (1955) Camb. 1959, p. 126

The citizen's assembly at Geneva on May 25th 1536 voted unanimously 'to live henceforth according to the Law of the Gospel and the Word of God and to abolish all Papal abuses'.[1] Calvin, said Canon Curteis, with a 'little intrepidity' found a basis in Scripture for 'lay rule'.[2] Or did Calvin not rather express a Reformed conviction that Church order should be 'Gospel testimony', to use Schweizer's phrase?[3] Church polity is an integral part of theology. Theology must conform closely to the exposition of the 'Word of God' in Scripture. Encouraged by Geneva to think through the question of polity, Calvin was likely to find in the Bible ample evidence of the people's share in government. Experience and previous training in the University of Paris may have contributed to the very strong conciliar emphasis which has remained a feature of Reformed Churchmanship.[4]

1 William Monter, Calvin's Geneva, p. 56

2 Curteis Dissent, p. 47. Curteis would not be given so much attention but for the fact that his views are 'topical' for our later discussion of nineteenth century Dissenters like Dale and the early writingsof Forsyth.

3 Eduard Schweizer (Reformed), Church Order in the New Testament, ET London 1961, pp. 15, 204, 229

4 Conciliar theories and notions of popular sovreignty were a very lively issue at the University of Paris where Calvin was a student of men like John Mair (See DNB) See Quentin Skinner, in Barbara C Malament, editor, After the Reformation, Manchester 1980, pp. 321f; Ganoczy, Le Jeune Calvin, Wiesbaden 1966, pp. 39, 187f, 242f says that Calvin was not influenced by the conciliarism of John Mair/Major and tends to be critical of general councils. On the other hand, Calvin did favour a form of conciliarism, ie. collegiality - see Alexandre Ganoczy, Ecclesia Ministrans, 1968, pp. 406-7. In any case, Congar, Lay People (1965), p. 40 notes that the early conciliar theories were 'immediately, much less favourable towards lay people'. See also A.J. Black, 'The Political Ideas of Conciliarism and Papalism, 1430-50', JEH XX, No. 1, April 1969, pp. 45-64; Brian Tierney, The Foundations of Conciliar Theory, Cambridge 1955; E.F. Jacob, Essays in the Conciliar Epoch, 3rd revised edition, Manchester 1963.

7. Calvin's writings disclose both very positive convictions about democracy in the Church and an ambivalence which could be construed as opposition. On the positive side, his 'Sermons on Deuteronomy' (1554-5) proclaimed that Israel had been given 'an excellent gift' in being able to choose judges and magistrates. Israel's neighbours had kings and princes but no 'liberty'. 'Let those to whom God has given liberty and freedom use it... as a singular benefit that cannot be prized enough'.[1] This is an impressive comment, not least because Calvin did not have such 'liberty'. He was not yet a citizen of Geneva, did not have the vote but had suffered and benefitted from Genevan elections. On elections in the Church, he comments (1560) on Acts 6:

> 'in the first place choice is permitted to the church. For it is a tyrannous thing if any single individual appoints ministers by his own authority. Therefore, the appropriate method is for those who are to enter into any public office in the church to be elected by common votes'.[2]

That much disputed text, Acts 14,23, and the key word χειροτονησαντες Calvin interprets as implying the free election by votes of those whom the apostles appoint.[3] Acts I, the choice of Matthias, he accepts as a unique case where the emphasis is on the divine election, signified by the use of lots. The election of the other apostles, including Paul, does not provide a sure precedent. Calvin in the Institution (1559),

1 John T McNeill, 'The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought', pp. 153-70, Church History, XVIII, No. 3, September 1949, p. 159f with reference to Calvin, Opera, XXVII, pp. 410f, 458f

2 Calvin's Commentaries: Acts, 2nd edition 1560, translated by John W Fraser and W J G McDonald, Edinburgh 1965, p. 161

3 Commentaries: Acts and Institution, IV/3/15 'presbyters elected by show of hands in evey church'. The dispute is about whether the Greek should be interpreted by the procedures at Greek political elections. For a discussion see R W Dale, Manual of Congregational Principles (1884), p. 68, Note II where Calvin, Beza, Owen, Doddridge are among those cited as arguing for 'popular elections'. Opposing views were sometimes dismissed as 'episcopal' or Roman Catholic - see, eg, Joseph Parker, Apostolic Life, 3 Volumes, London 1884-5, Vol. II, p. 57

IV/3/13, on Galatians 1, 1, says that Paul affirms that 'he was chosen not by men's decision like any common bishop, but by the mouth and manifest oracle of the Lord himself'. In other words, 'any common bishop'[1] should be elected. Twenty years earlier Calvin in his 'Reply' to Cardinal Sadolet had asked the Cardinal 'How are your bishops elected?' and had not, so far as we know, been answered.[2]

In this same letter Calvin does not insist on a return to the constitution of the Apostolic Church in every detail,

> 'though in it we have the only model of a true Church, and whoever deviates from it in the smallest degree is in error'

but accepts 'the ancient form of the Church' as portrayed in the writings of Chrysostom, Basil, Cyprian, Ambrose and Augustine.[3] He accepts Tradition provided this does not contradict Scripture.[4]

> 'The freedom of the people to choose their own bishops was long preserved: no one was to be thrust into office who was not acceptable to all. It was therefore forebidden at the Council of Antioch that anyone be intruded upon the people against their will.'[5]

In support of this custom Calvin also quotes Leo I: 'Let him who is to be set over all be chosen by all',[6] and Cyprian.[7]

1 In the Institution, IV/3/8 Calvin states that in the New Testament 'bishops' and 'presbyters' are equivalent terms.

2 'Reply by John Calvin to the Letter by Cardinal Sadolet to the Senate and People of Geneva', pp. 219-56 in Calvin: Theological Treatises, J K S Reid, editor, London 1954, p. 245; for both sides of the debate see John C Olin, editor, John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoleto, A Reformation Debate, New York, 1966

3 'Reply to Sadolet', Treatises, p. 231

4 W S Reid, The Present Significance of Calvin's View of Tradition, Guelph 1966

5 Institution (1559), IV/4/11. The Council of Antioch was in 341.

6 ibid, IV/4/11 and Leo, Letters, x,6 .

7 ibid, IV/4/10

He further explains that there was usually a long period of probation so that candidates for higher office were well known to the people.[1] Calvin's appeal to the Fathers, on whom he was an expert, in support of popular election or popular consent, becomes in turn part of a 'tradition' to be drawn on by a whole range of apologists for the laity from Henry Jacob and John Owen among Independents of the seventeenth century to Yves Congar and Hans Küng among Roman Catholics of the twentieth. Cyprian's:

> 'from the beginning of my episcopate I determined not to do anything without the advice of the clergy and the consent of the people',

quoted by Calvin in his Institution, becomes a much used text.[2]

1 Institution (1559), IV/4/10. Ordinations also took place at well publicised times and places 'in order that no one might creep in secretly without the consent of the believers'.

2 Institution IV/11/6 ; Cyprian, Letters xvi,2; xvii,2; xiv,4 (Notes in the McNeill edition). Cyprian is quoted in Henry Jacob, An Attestation of Many, Learned, Godly and Famous Divines, London 1613, p. 58; John Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, London 1689, p. 78; Yves Congar, Lay People in the Church, ET London 1965, p. 245; Hans Küng, Structures of the Church, ET London 1965, p. 68. Thus Congar and Küng are doing what Calvin suggested Sadolet should do, go back to 'the ancient form of the Church'.
Cyprian and Leo are also used in Edward Schillebeeckx argument that ministry should not be established by 'absolute' ordinations unrelated to specific ecclesial communities, Ministry(1980), ET 1981, p. 40

Much was made of the word 'consent' in the 'troubles at Frankfort'1554–8, on which Calvin was consulted, as we can see in A Brief Discourse. Christopher Goodman argued with Dr David Cox, the leader of the English Prayer Book party at Frankfort, that the election of a minister ought not to proceed without 'the consent of the whole church' whereas clergy were electing clergy. Cox in a letter to Calvin said that the people's consent was given both in the appointment of various officers and on the decision as to the 'Form of Prayer'. Calvin in reply said:

> 'All good men will allow the Pastors and other Ministers elections with common voices so that none can complain that the other part of the church was oppressed fraudulently, and with crafty practices.'

It is clear from this correspondence that Calvin had a reputation, reinforced by his own reply, for supporting the right of the 'common voices' to be heard.[1]

On the other hand he does not want too much noise or tumult. He wants a balance between expert advice and common consent and it is this sort of equivocation which may raise doubts about his support for 'church democracy'.

1 A Brief Discourse (1575), London 1907, pp. 72-9. Cox's letter to Calvin is dated April 5th 1555.

The 'balance between people and clergy' is discussed in the Institution in a comment on the decree of the almost unknown Council or Synod of Laodicea.[1] (The location at least for a decision which is 'neither hot nor cold' is just right !). The same example is used in his Commentary on the controversial text, Acts 14,23. Calvin says :

> 'It was with very good reason, I confess, that the Council of Laodicea decided not to leave election to the multitude. For it scarcely ever happens that so many heads can unanimously settle any matter; and it is generally true that the " uncertain crowd is divided into contrary interests".'

Nominations might start either with the clergy or the people. If the former, then the people 'although not bound by the previous decisions, nevertheless could not raise a tumult' . If the latter, the people suggested possible candidates but choice was left to the clergy:

> 'Thus, neither were the clergy allowed to appoint whom they wished, nor was it necessary for them to follow the foolish desires of the people... The decree of the Synod of Laodicea means only that clergy and leaders should not allow themselves to be carried away by the heedless multitude, but rather, by their prudence and seriousness, should repress, if need be, the multitude's foolish desires. '[2]

And before anyone sees here only another example of Calvin's contempt for the mob,[3] it should be appreciated that the 'troubles at Frankfort' are a good illustration of the inability of a congregation 'after much debating to and fro' to reach agreement;

1 The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church says that nothing definite is known of the Council of Laodicea. If there was such a council it might be dated c 365 AD, or it may be a collective title for canons made at different times in the 4th century. See also McNeill's note on IV/4/12 infra

2 Institution, 1559, IV/4/12. Leo I is again quoted. A comparison with earlier editions shows that Calvin came to a more positive appreciation of the people's part. In 1536 Calvin would not give 'a definite law' on whether a minister be elected bya meeting of the whole church, a few, or the magistrate. The above 1559 conclusion had been worked out by 1543.

3 Höpfl, The Christian Polity, 1982, p157 thinks that hostility to the mob is not as marked in Calvin as one might expect. On the other hand, Basil Hall, Reformation City,1971 p147: 'His distaste for mobs of armed men at election times is exposed over and over again in his sermons at those periods.'

of dangers when, as there, 'contention grew at length so hot'; and the value of making experts, in this case Calvin, Musculus, Peter Martyr Vermigli, Bullinger and Virat, a'court of appeal' or at least a becalming influence.[1] Moreover, it was one thing to quote from Vergil 'the uncertain crowd is divided into contrary interests'[2] but it was excruciating for any Churchman to admit that this was a true description of Reformed congregations such as that at Frankfort.[3] Calvin in his own dealings with that church was extremely careful not to stir up further strife and had contented himself with a firm but gentle rebuke of the Cox and English Prayer Book party : 'Master Knox was, in my judgement, neither godly, nor brotherly, dealt withal'.[4] Likewise in his correspondence with England Calvin was anxious, as well he might be in 1552 with at least another hundred years of strife in store, about further dissensions and urged people 'peaceably' to conform to 'any order that is not repugnant to the Word of God'.[5] This is the context in which his comment about the Council of Laodicea and popular elections must be understood.

That Calvin could be misunderstood was shown by John Whitgift. This future Archbishop of Canterbury and successor to Grindal, who had been in Frankfort, says, with reference to Calvin, that the

1 A Brief Discourse, pp 52-3. It was agreed that no further change in their church order should take place without consulting Calvin, Viret etc.

2 A variation of Vergil, Aeneid, II, 39

3 Calvin as Churchman is concerned for the unity of the Church. Critics of the Reform movement could also point to Amsterdam, later to Rotterdam, and of course to England and alas to New England for examples of internal divisions.

4 A Brief Discourse, p 79, Calvin's letter dated 31 May 1555.

5 Letters of John Calvin, edited by Jules Bonnet, ET by David Constable, Edin. 1855, Vol II, p 346 from Calvin's Letter to the French Church in London, 27 September 1552.

Council of Laodicea 'decreed that the election of ministers should not be permitted to the people'[1]. Cardinal Bellarmine also attempted to use Calvin and Laodicea against popular elections and was challenged by the Reformed theologian Davide Blondello who was quite convinced that Calvin did not wish the people to be 'mutos electionis testes'[2]. Whitgift was answered by Thomas Cartwright, only recently returned from Geneva, in 1572[3]. A careful reading of the Institution or the Commentaryon Acts 14,23, supports the interpretation given by Cartwright and Blondello but,if we assume that neither Bellarmine nor Whitgift were deliberately perverse, the very argument shows that there was some ambiguity about Calvin's thought.

Nor did Genevan-counselled practice in the election of ministers resolve the dispute. In 1546 the people of Neuchatel had voiced a strong preference for Christopher Fabri, minister at Thonon, as their minister. Although actual nomination was in the hands of the pastors, Calvin in a letter to Viret expressed the confidence that it was 'almost certain that Christopher would be the man' and indeed he was.[4] The matter was agreed. But at Geneva the people's part in the election of a minister, as outlined in the Ordinances of 1541, may have been that of a mere cypher.[5]

1 Thomas Cartwright, A Reply to an Answer made by Dr Whitgift against the Admonition to the Parliament by T.C. Lond. 1572, p.35

2 Davide Blondello, Apologia pro Sententia Hieronymi de Episcopis et Presbyteris, Amsterdam 1646 pp 481f. ; reference to Robert Bellarmine, De Clericis, Lib. I, Cap. VII p313.

3 Supra. Calvin of course was now deceased.

4 Letters of John Calvin, II, p22 Geneva, 22nd February 1546, Calvin to Viret and editor's notes

5 Höpfl, The Christian Polity, 1982 p·92 but he qualifies this comment. A certificate had to be issued by the magistracy who were acting on behalf of the people. Approval had also to be given by the Council who were elected by the people. The 'Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances',September and October 1541, are printed in J K S Reid, ed., Calvin Theological Treatises, Lond1954, pp .56–72 with notes on ammendments by the Councils before final approval in November 1541

From The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva we see that the pastors nominated Jean Fabri, minister at Lyon, as a minister in Geneva in 1549. The Council at first argued against any appointment on the grounds that six ministers were sufficient. Through representatives they also heard Fabri preach a trial sermon. The appointment was agreed but there is no clear statement that approval was given by the faithful. [1] Co-option of ministers by ministers was one of the points on which Jean Morély took issue with Calvin:

> 'Car de permettre á l'advenir aux ministres de elire les Consistoires, & Senieurs, comme aussi les Pasteurs, et se coopter... c'est chose par dangereuse'. [2]

In theory, Calvin tried to balance the claims of ministers and people for this is an inherent feature of his stated preference for 'an aristocracy bordering on popular government'. For the latter Calvin uses the word 'politia'.[3] This, and the reference to 'the three forms of government which the philosophers discuss', shows that Calvin is drawing on the classical ideal of a mixed constitution that was much used by the Conciliarist thinkers in the Medieval Church.[4] The 'philosophers' included Plato and Aristotle who used a five/six-fold classification, subdividing three distinct types of government. In Aristotle democracy is a perversion of constitutional government. [5]

1 The Register, edited and translated by Philip Hughes, Grand Rapids 1966, pp. 113-4

2 Jean Baptise Morély(see below), Traicté de la Discipline et Policé Chrestienne (Lyon 1562), Geneva 1968, p. 39

3 Institution IV/20/8. The Latin text reads 'vel aristocratiam vel temperatum ex ipsa et politia statum' which McNeill translates as 'aristocracy or a system compounded of aristocracy and democracy'. But'politia' could be constitutional government, and is distinguished in Aristotle from democracy. However, the French text,(1560) as Beveridge notes, has 'democratie qu'est une domination populaire'.

4 I owe this point to a lecture by Prof. Joachim Stieber, Smith College Massachusetts,given in Oxford in May 1983, 'The Mixed Constitution and the Councils of Constance and Basle'. Aristotle was translated into Latin in 1215 but the Dominicans had a mixed polity before this

5 Aristotle,Politics, III/18; IV/4; Plato, The Statesman(Loeb) pl25,6

Later Aristotle describes 'politia', constitutional government, as a mixture of oligarchy and democracy.[1] In Calvin what is excluded from any such mixture is one-man rule:

> 'men's fault or failing causes it to be safer and more bearable for a number (plures) to exercise government, so that they may help one another, teach and admonish one another ; and, if one asserts himself unfairly, there may be a number of censors and masters to restrain his willfullness. This has both been proved by experience, and also the Lord confirmed it by his authority when he ordained among the Israelites an aristocracy bordering on democracy...(Exodus 18,13-26 ; Deuteronomy 1; 9-17)

He then adds a very clear commendation of liberty and a plea to magistrates to see that this is in no way diminished -all of which might possibly tip the balance between leaders and people slightly in favour of the latter.[2] But this of course is debateable.

Calvin does not explicitly apply the concept of mixed government to church polity but others certainly did and we can legitimately do this for him. In any case,in Geneva there could be no sharp distinction between what government is best for the State and what for the Church and this had been true for Israel, hence the Old Testament references incorporated in his text.

Bellarmine said that the Church was a Monarchy in respect of the Pope, an Aristocracy in the Bishops, and a Democracy (Dimocratiam) since no one could be called to the episcopate who had not been judged worthy by the people.[3] He refers to three sections of the Institution in support of mixed polity:

1 Aristotle, Politics, IV/8.
2 Calvin, Institution , 1559, IV/20/8. The first part is new to the 1559 edition.The preference for modified aristocracy had been stated in 1543. Höpfl,The Christian Polity, 1982, does not accept the view that Calvin became more and more critical of monarchy.
3 Robert Bellarmine, Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei adversus huius temporis haereticos, Ingolstadt 1587- , 'De Romano Pontificis Ecclesiastica Hierarchia',Lib 1,Cap.3,p607

IV/6/8; IV/11/6 and the passage already studied, IV/20/8.[1] His selection is very daring. The first concedes that Peter was preeminent among the apostles but Calvin goes on to reject the idea of a universal human head of the Church. Christ alone is called Head of the Body.[2] He does accept the necessity of a chairman or moderator of any assembly[3] but, as Bellarmine could have seen had he also read IV/4/2 , a bishop is one with the presbyters. Though appointed to prevent dissensions, he 'ought to govern the church in co-operation with them (the presbyters). In the section IV/11/6, which he does refer to, appeal is made to Cyprian once more, this time to reinforce the point about collegiality, and to report that Ambrose felt it was a departure from wiser polity that the laity were now often excluded from this partnership. Modern Roman Catholics like Cardinal Suenens and his teaching on Co-Responsibility in the Church[4] might even be said to be correcting Bellarmine in the light of Calvin![5]

Nearer to Calvin's meaning, as one would expect, is Thomas Cartwright. The Church is a Monarchy in respect of Christ, an Aristocracy in respect of the pastors who govern 'in common and with like authority', and in that the people are 'not excluded' but have an interest in church matters it is 'a Democracy or Popular Estate'[6] . A similar exposition is found in William Ames,

1 Bellarmine, Controversiis, 'De Romano Pontificis' Lib.I, Cap. 2 pp 598f.
2 Institution, IV/6/9, IV/6/17
3 Institution, IV/6/8, 'no meeting of the Senate without a consul.. Cf. Commentary on Philippians, 1548, Philippians 1,1-6.
4 Joseph Suenens, Co-Responsibility in the Church, ET 1968.
5 See for example, Alexandre Ganoczy, Calvin und Vaticanum II, das Problem der Kollegialitat, Wiesbaden 1965, where detailed comment is made on the Institution IV/4/2,4,14 etc.
6 Cartwright, A Reply to an Answer, London 1572, pp. 33-5 Cartwright begins by saying that it wrong to say that in the Apostles time the Church was 'popular'. It had what the philosophers call the best constitution, a mixed government.

who describes the constitution of the Church as of 'mixed nature' and 'partly as it were democratical'.[1] John Cotton's exposition is worth quoting in full because of the detailed attention he gives to democracy:

> 'but (as the best governments be)of mixt temper , in respect of Christ (whose voice alone must be heard and his rule kept) it is Monarchy; in respect of the people's power in choosing officers, and joint power with the officers in admitting members, in censuring offenders, it is Democracy; in respect of the officers' instruction and reproof of the people in the public ministry, and of ordering of all things in the assembly, it is an Aristocracy.'[2]

This is a very balanced comment for someone who is more often reported as saying: 'Democracy - I do not conceive that ever God did ordain as a fit government either for Church or Commonwealth'[3] Cotton was also extremely indignant with someone who said that democracy was all very well in Athens, 'a city fruitful of pregnant wits' but would soon degenerate into anarchy in a place like Jerusalem. How could anyone , asks Cotton, place more confidence in 'pregnant wits' than in 'sanctified hearts' ?[4] The debate is thus being carried forward to the importance of 'the gathered church' and the disciplined membership.

But to return, just briefly, to Calvin. Were this a study of Calvin rather than of the wider debate he stimulated much more could be said about other facets of his church polity. More, for example, about other ways in which church people participated besides sharing in the election of church officers. Church discipline, censures and excommunication is one but is complicated by the

1 William Ames, The Marrow of Sacred Divinity, Lond 1642 p 163.
2 John Cotton, The Ways of the Churches of Christ in New England, Lond 1645, p 100. Cotton was extremely influential in propagating 'the Congregational Way'.He influenced Goodwin,Nye and not least, John Owen. See Nuttall, Visible Saints, pp 14-17. His own debt to Calvin is indicated, inter alia, in his description of church officers, ruling elders etc, ibid ,pp11-25.
3 Quoted in Perry Miller, Orthodoxy in Massachusetts,Harvard, Cambridge , 1933 p 229.
4 John Cotton, The Ways, Lond 1645, p 100

peculiar features of Genevan politics. There was a long struggle for greater autonomy for the Church before it was eventually agreed by the Councils that the Consistory of ministers and elders had final authority in this matter.[1] The practice of discipline has a democratic feature in that it is applied to all and perhaps most severely to the clergy who must attend weekly meetings for discussions of the Scriptures.[2] It is aristocratic in that Calvin interprets Matthew 18,15 f, 'tell it to the church' as 'the tribunal of the church, that is, the assembly of the elders'.[3] Sutcliffe, at one time Dean of Exeter, criticised Calvin on both counts. He complained that at Geneva the people knew nothing about the cases of discipline and could only wonder at 'the divine sentence of the holy Consistory'. On the other hand, he objects that Calvin makes no distinction 'betwixt those which rule, and those which are subject, for the discipline (says he) is common'.[4] The conviction that the ultimate authority in the admission and dismissal of members is the 'congregational' Church Meeting is clearly stated in John Norton's The Answer 1648.[5] John Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, 1688, said that excommunication without the consent of the church is a mere nullity for only the members can really make exclusion from their fellowship effective.[6]

1 The Registers, pp 286–305. Agreement reached January 24th, 1555.
2 'Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances', 1541, in Calvin, Theological Treatises, (1954) p 60.
3 Institution, 1559, IV/12/2. In IV/12/1 the educational function of discipline to restrain or encourage is emphasised. It should be noted that Calvin does not make Discipline a mark of the Church. In this he differed from Bucer and later 'Congregationalists'. See Wendel, Calvin p 301.
4 Matthew Sutcliffe, A Treatise of Ecclesiastical Discipline, Lond 1590, p 199; p 8.
5 John Norton, The Answer, Translated by Douglas Horton, Harvard 1958, pp 36–7.
6 John Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church pp 209–10, 219. Owen attempts a distinction, p 219, the officers have authority to implement church acts, the brethren have power. The difficulty of maintaining this distinction has recently been explored by Stephen Brachlow, Puritan Theology and Radical Churchmen, unpublished Oxford D.Phil. Thesis, 1978, in relation to Henry Jacob and John Robinson, p 54, 95, etc.

It is one thing to exclude a few people from fellowship, another to dismiss half the human race from the plan of salvation. This is what Calvin is still accused of doing through his doctrines of double predestination and limited atonement. For both reasons it is then asserted that 'Calvinism could not be a democratic doctrine'.[1] Under the influence of Calvin, the Puritans, said J. Neville Figgis, were bound to be, and were, oligarchic: 'history has never suffered a deeper perversion than in the popular notion that Puritans were democrats'.[2] The whole argument of this chapter is that, with some modifications, history does in fact support this 'popular notion'. The argument arises very largely from a confusion of Calvin and Calvinism. The sort of Calvinism that in Forsyth's phrase became 'clotted' did preach a limited atonement and accept that Christ died only for the elect. This can be traced back to the Synod of Dortdrecht, but scholars are not sure this was Calvin's own view.[3] Forsyth in his chapters on 'The New Calvinism', which were really about the old, authentic Calvin, said emphatically: 'the essence of Calvinism is not the doctrine of predestination but the doctrine of God'. It was because Calvin cared so much for the freedom of God that Calvinism became a democratic creed.[4] The Arminians, as the opponents of Calvinism at the Synod of Dordrecht(1618-19) became known, supported the Divine Right of Kings. But to return to Church practice.

1 Christopher Hill, God's Englishman, Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution (1970), Penguin Books, London 1972, p.206

2 John Neville Figgis, The Fellowship of the Mystery, London 1914, pp.147-174 'The Democracy of the Catholic Church', p.156f

3 See, for example, R.T.Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649, Oxford 1979, pp. 1-2; Stanley H Russell, A Study in Augustine and Calvin, Unpublished D. Phil Thesis, Oxford 1958, pp. 215, 246. For a Reformed and more Christological restatement of Calvin's doctrine of predestination see Karl Barth, CD (ET 1957), II/2, pp, 18, 63, 67 (criticism of Dort) p. 188f (comment on a Calvin Congress, Geneva 1936)

4 Forsyth, Faith Freedom and the Future (1912), London 1955, pp. 263-4.

Another subject is lay participation in various church councils. The Council in Acts 15 Calvin sees as a good illustration of leadership by the apostles and presbyters and involvement of church people: 'it seemed good to the apostles and elders with the whole church ' , Acts 15,22. The questions were decided by 'those who were powerful in doctrine and judgement' but the debate was probably held in public:

> 'for there is nothing less consistent with holy and Christian order than the exclusion of the body of the people from common doctrine, as if they were a herd of pigs, as usually happens under the tyranny of the papacy. ' [1]

Proud pastors may still act like tyrants: it is

> 'tyranny, born of the pride of the pastors, that things which belong to the common circumstances of the whole Church, are submitted to the judgement, not to speak of the caprice, of a few to the exclusion of the people' [2]

And for such tasks the laity are educated. There is a very strong insistence in Calvin on a teaching ministry. This is very much part of that'Necessity of Reforming the Church' that he had urged on the Emperor, Charles V in 1543.[3]

But in all these appeals and recommendations one should also note Calvin's distaste for those who wish:

> 'to make an idol of me and a Jerusalem of Geneva'[4]

Geneva had its own distinctive features. Being a compact town, and a town whose bishop had fled, it was not necessarily the model for a more territorial church. There were also those like Sutcliffe who asked if people with less experience in democratic government than the Genevans could make good democrats.[5] Morely

1 Commentary on Acts, 2nd ed. 1560.ET, Edin 1965. Acts 15,30
2 Commentary on Acts, 15,22.
3 Reprinted, in abbreviated form, in Calvin:Theological Treatises pp 184-216. See p 207f
4 Calvin, Letters, Vol II, p 346 in the Letter to the French Church in London, 27th September 1552.
5 Matthew Sutcliffe, A Treatise of Ecclesiastical Discipline, p201.

thought they could.

Jean Baptiste Morély was, like Calvin, born in France. He was the son of a French royal physician and held seigneurial rank.[1] He was the subject of strong controversy in synods of the Reformed Church in France but his chief significance for us is that he helped to put democracy on the English churches' agenda. His name became a by-word for popular government. Paul Bayne who died in 1617 but whose book, The Diocesan's Tryal was published in 1644 said on discipline:

> 'the multitude have not this execution ordinary as all but Morelius, and some democratical spirits do affirm' [2]

A still earlier reference can be found in Henry Jacob's Attestation 1613. Jacob says he does not support Morellius because:

> 'he fought in churches perfectly established to bring all things in particular, and ordinarily to the people's hearing, exercising, judging and voice giving. But neither Beza nor we intend so' [3]

Jacob in turn refers to George Downame, one time Bishop of Derry, and his A Defence of a Sermon, 1611 where Morellius is dismissed as fanatical.[4]

These early references might even count as a 'discovery of new facts'. In the pamphlets of the 1640's Morély is notorious, well known to such men as Apollonius, Rathband, Rutherford, John Norton and Robert Baillie.[5] I am not convinced by the

1 Morély was rediscovered for historians by Robert M Kingdon, Geneva and the Consolidation of the French Protestant Movement 1564-1572, Geneva 1967. There is a useful report in J H Salmon, Society in Crisis, France in the Sixteenth Century, Lond 1975, pp 179-82; and a brisk assessment of his significance for England in B R White, The English Separatist Tradition, Oxford 1971, p xiii.

2 Bayne, The Diocesan's Tryal wherein the main controversies about the Forme or Government of the Churches of Christ are judiciously stated.., Lond 1644, p 80 in ref. to Mt. 18,17.

3 Henry Jacob, An Attestation of Many Learned, Godly and and Famous Divines...Lond 1613 p 24. Jacob's stated aim is to show that 'the Church Government ought to be always with the people's free consent'.(part of the title)

4 See Jacob, supra, 24. Downham-see DNB- is one of many Protestants who also engages in controversy with Bellarmine.

5 See Robert Kingdom, Geneva and the Consolidation, p133; John Norton, The Answer to...Apollonius, 1648 (1958) p 6; The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, ed David Laing, Edin. 1841, Vol II, pp 163, 179, 184,188 etc.

arguments of Robert Kingdon that Jean Morèly could not be 'the 'Master Morellio, another Minister of the French Church ' with whom the 'troubled' congregation at Frankfort 'concurred' in June 1554.[1] He would certainly have supported those who wanted more say in church affairs and even if he was then in Geneva others whom the Frankfort church consulted, notably Viret and Peter Martyr Vermigli, were not at all undemocratic.

Clearly by the 1640's many in England knew of Morèly but not much about him. The reason was simple. His book, Traictè de la Discipline et Policè Chrestienne, published in Lyon in 1562, was condemned the same year in the Synod of Orleans, the the Consistory at Geneva, and after a decade of further argument, his views received, some hoped a fatal, condemnation at La Rochelle in 1571.[2] Beza, now Calvin's successor, was present at the Synod. Baillie in 1644, embroiled in the ecclesiastical controversies of the Westminster Assembly, wrote to William Spang, minister of the Scots congregation near Middleburgh, 'send me Morellius if you can get him'.[3] But Morellius was not to be found. No copy of his work appears in the catalogues of either the Bodleian or the Bibliothèque Nationale before 1968, the year his Traictè was reproduced and republished in Geneva.

And why not in Geneva ? Morèly saw himself as a Reformed Churchman. He may have consulted Calvin, he certainly sought advice from Viret.[4] When he was accused in France it was partly

1 William Whittingham, A Brief Discourse, 1575, p23; Robert M Kingdon, Geneva and the Consolidation, p 43,note.

2 J H Salmon, Society in Crisis, 1975 pp 180-1. Salmon thinks it remarkable that such a 'radical' 'congregationalist' movement survived so long in the France of the Wars of Religion, and the prelude to the St Bartholomew Massacre 1572.

3 The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, Vol II, p191, letter of June 9th, 1644.

4 Kingdon, supra, p 46.

perhaps because Swiss democracy was held responsible for the Huguenot peasant leagues.[1] He had also spent ten years in Geneva. If my preceding argument is convincing he probably got on much better with Calvin than he could with Beza. It was Beza, not Calvin, who wrote(to Bullinger) of 'perbatissimam et seditisissimam democratiam '[2]. But it was in Geneva, under Calvin, or one should say, with Calvin, that he witnessed developments in Reformed Churchmanship that he challenged, like a Reformed Churchman, on the basis of Scripture.

Morély does not argue with the description of the Apostolic polity as democratic though he attributes the phrase to others- 'ce gouvernement democratique (diront ils) est plein de confusion'.[3] He cannot be guided by such pragmatic considerations. This polity is given by the Saviour. It may be argued that Apostolic times were very different from ours but then it is also true that heaven is far removed from the earth.[4] He objects, as we have seen, to the Genevan practice of ministers co-opting ministers.[5] When he uses the word'l'Eglise'he means all the faithful and he laments the way the term 'clergé ' has been applied to a faction of the Church and the rest demoted to 'peuple ou de plebe',[6] in striking contrast with 1 Peter 2. But like Calvin, and being just as conscious of the risk of tumults, he does not want a leaderless church. He wants 'pasteurs et senieurs' to clarify obscure points but then submit matters to the 'iugement de l'Eglise'.[7] It is in this context that he does deny, as he says he has done so often, that the

1 J H Salmon, Society in Crisis, p 181, the opinion of Monluc.
2 Cited in Kingdon, Geneva and the Consolidation, p103.
3 Traicté, p32. I think he repudiates 'democracy' in the sense of 'the will of the people' but not as a method for discerning the will of God.
4 Traicté ,pA2 5 Traicté, p39 6 Traicté, p 66.
7 Traicté , p33.

'tel gouvernement que nostre Seigneur Iesus a instituè estre democratie, et estat populaire'[1].

One should elect those who are pleasing to God.[2] And it is the people, the Church, which has this power to elect.[3] In the Old Testament Morèly finds support in the election of the 70 elders at the time of Moses; in Jeremiah 38; Esdra 10; 1 Maccabees 4.[4] In the New Testament we have Acts 6 and Acts 14,23.[5] Beyond, we have the now familiar commendation of Cyprian.[6] In effect he underlines his contention that the people are not to be a mere 'spectatrice'.[7] He makes it quite clear that this is what they have become.[8] Like Calvin he refers to the Council of Laodicea and seems to be aware that some use this - and Calvin's alleged meaning- as an argument against the people's participation.[9] Towards the end of the book he commends Calvin: 'un de plus excellencs Apostres que le Seigneur a suscitès en ce temps'.[10]

Perhaps Morèly is not that important, his work too little known in England to be influential. On the other hand those who have been intrigued by the 'democratic' influence of the Independents have sometimes looked outside the Reformed Church to the Anabaptists whom Calvin denounced.[11] Morèly suggests that it is possible to admire Calvin and be democratic.Other Reformed Churchmen would agree. There could even be a place for Morèly among those who stand out in effigy in modern Geneva's Reformation wall.

1 Traictè p32. 2 Traictè p176 3 Traictè p36 ; p174.
4 Traictè pp 131-2. 5 Traictè p176; p188.
6 Traicte p177 7 Traictè p177 8 Traictè pp184f.
9 Traictè p227; Calvin, Institution, IV/4/12 and Commentary on Acts
10 Traictè p257.
11 See W Balke, Calvijn en de Doperse Radikalen,Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals, Amsterdam 1973. This Dutch study has summaries in English and German. Calvin objects to their perfectionism,separatism and refusal to hold office in the state.This will lead to anarchy which is worse than tyranny. ibid pp350-1. Balke also asks, p352, whether Anabaptism would have arisen under Calvin. See also Höpfl,The Christian Polity p 80 for comment on the contrast of Strasbourg with Geneva. B R White, The English Separatist Tradition,pxiii notes that Morèly too was opposed to the Anabaptists.

The heroes of this monument, had they been more carefully selected, could symbolise the conciliar practice of the Reformed churches. At Frankfort, it will be remembered, others besides Calvin were consulted. The Letters of Robert Baillie and the correspondence between John Norton in New England and William Apollonius in the Netherlands about 'certain controversies concerning Church Government now being agitated in England'[1] are impressive evidence of an international Church whose members read each other's books, and those of their critics, and take counsel together. The New England divines read William Ames and Daniel Chamier, Bellarmine, Calvin and a library of others.[2] Apollonius had read the redoubtable Katherine Chidley,[3] notable for her connections with the Leveller democratic movement and very capable of meeting the criticisms of 'Gangraena' Edwards. Norton in New England knew how people in the French Church signified their consent at elections and had by him the Commentaries of Daneau, published in Geneva in 1577.[4] Petitioners to Elizabeth I dropped in the names of John a Lasco, Zwingli, Bucer, Calvin, Farel and Viret.[5] And Viret was quoted by Henry Jacob and described by him as 'a rare light of the Gospel'.[6] This reformation debate was very far from being a series of insular assertions of the rights of private judgement.

1 Part of the full title of John Norton's The Answer, 1648.
2 ibid, Translators Preface by Douglas Horton, p xvi. Because Norton could write, and did write this work in Latin, he could penetrate the scholarly world of the Continent.
3 The Answer, p 19 ; Katherine Chidley, A Justification of the Independent Churches of Christ being an Answer to Mr Edward's, Lond.1641. Her later book, A New Year's Gift was also a Brief Exhoration to Mr Edwards, Lond 1645.She also challenged Edwards to a six-a-side public disputation . See Ian Gentles, 'London Levellers and the English Revolution, the Chidleys and their Circle, JEH Vol 29, 1978 pp282-293.
4 The Answer, p115.
5 A Petition to Her Most Excellent Majesty, not dated but post 1571 included in Bodleian pamphlets, ASHM 1203
6 Henry Jacob, An Attestation of Many Learned, Godly and Famous Divines.. np 1613. p28

What would Henry Jacob learn from Pierre Viret and why would he find him so attractive? Jacob, it was noted earlier, was critical of Morely because he wanted everything in the church to be discussed by everybody. Yet like Morely he was suspected of being subversive. In an earlier book, Reasons Taken Out of God's Word and the Best Human Testimonies proving a Necessity of Reforming our Churches in England, 1604, he was anxious to assert that he and those who agreed with him were not anti monarchy and denied that :

> 'this Ecclesiastical government being popular(say they) it will require the Civil government also to become conformed to it. Also they think it can never be managed without trouble and tumult '. [1]

He also gives an interesting extension to the debate about church democracy for he admits that there had been tumultuous elections of diocesan bishops. But the fault lay with the diocesan structure: ' such voice giving of such multitudes of people we desire not '.[2] He then explains that their elections are held only among Christian people of the one parish and that these elections are supervised by ecclesiastical guides.[3] Hence'it is childish and against all wit to cry out against us (as our adversaries do) popularity, anarchy and emnity to princes ' ,[4]

Many of these views can be found in Viret. Viret's Instruction Chrestienne, like Calvin's Institution , was revised in various editions from 1556 to 1564. Henry Jacob refers to the first edition which was in dialogue form.[5] A translation of some parts appeared in English in 1573 but

1 Jacob, Reasons, p25.
2 Reasons, pp 26-27. He sees this as a corruption of an earlier practice for the bishops then elected had been local pastors.
3 Reasons, pp 27-28, elections and excommunications; An Attestation, 1613, p17. The people who have this power are 'such as are not ignorant in religion nor scandalous in their life'.
4 Reasons, p 28.
5 An Attestation, pp 28-29. Jacob refers to Viret's Dialogue 20 and Dialogue 21, neither of which have I been able to locate.

English readers appear to be more familiar with Morély, whose book they could not find, than with Viret whose more numerous writings they could obtain in French or sometimes in English.[1] He has remained relatively unknown until his rediscovery by Robert Linder in The Political Ideas of Pierre Viret, published in Geneva in 1964.

Morély, of course discovered him earlier, andso did Calvin. Morély's Traictè was dedicated to this close friend and colleague of Calvin, and minister at Lausanne, for he said it was to Pierre Viret that he was indebted for much of his inspiration. It may also be that it was thanks to Viret's discreet but effective intervention, when he was Moderator of a French Synod in 1563, that nothing more was said about the author and the book that had been condemned, in Viret's absence, the year before.[2] Viret did for church democracy something that the more obscure Morély could never do. He made it look respectable.

Calvin's Letters always describe Viret in close, personal terms as well they might.[3] Calvin was born in 1509, Viret in 1511. They were both students at the University of Paris, a centre of radical political and conciliar thought. And it was Viret, along with Farel, who, in Calvin's own words, had been responsible for expelling the Papacy from Geneva not long before Calvin's first appointment to that city.[4] Then later, in his exile from Geneva in Strasbourg, Calvin had commended Viret to those who

1 Robert Linder, The Political Ideas of Pierre Viret, Geneva 1964, p177 'The possibility that Viret influenced English religious and poliitical thought awaits exploration.'

2 Political Ideas of Pierre Viret, pp 90-1. Nowhere in writing did Viret disassociate himself from Morély's views.

3 See Letters of John Calvin, Edin 1855, Vol I, pp 27-9 and editor's notes; Vol II, pp134-5, 'To Viret', 14th December 1547.

4 From Calvin's Preface to his Commentary on the Psalms , quoted in Wendel, Calvin, ET 1965 p 48

pleaded with him to return. Viret came back to Geneva on loan from the church in Lausanne, but,alas for Calvin, the loan was temporary :'should Viret be taken away from me I shall be utterly ruined, and this church will be past recovery', he told Farel in November 1541.[1]

With such credentials it is all the more significant that in his 1564 edition of his Instruction Chrestienne he affirmed without apology that the Church is 'la communaitè des fideles' to which had been given all power and authority under Christ, 'l'estat populaire, le quel on a anciennement appelè democratie'.[2] Though was it also signficant that 1564 was the year of Calvin's death ? Again, a matter for debate. To those who fear confusion in the Church because all will try to be masters, Viret says very clearly about the Church : 'elle a Jesus Christ pour son chef',[3] an emphasis that is in the immediate presence of Christ with his people in a position of Headship that no man can occupy even as Christ's deputy,[4] a point made by Calvin about the Church Catholic vis a vis the Papacy but now localised in Viret. He discusses at some length the merits of different forms of government but without advocating a mixed polity.He thinks, as a safeguard against tyrannyit is best of all if authority is placed in the hands of many,'plusieurs', rather than in a 'petit nombre'.[5] The Church certainly is not like a monarchy. It is 'une sainctè et franchè communaitè'to which Christ has given power in general and not to anyone in particular.[6] In a passage

1 Letters of John Calvin, 1855, Vol I p282, 11th November 1541.
2 Instruction Chrestienne, 1564, p 86.
3 ibid, p86.
4 Calvin, Institution, 1559 IV/6/8-10 'The church can have no human head'.
5 Instruction Chrestienne, p251; Robert Linder,Political Ideas of Pierre Viret, p 88 interprets as saying that aristococracy compounds the dangers of monarchy because there are potentially more tyrants.
6 Instruction Chrestienne, p 86.

which would commend itself to many Congregationalists Viret says:

> 'Wherefore I esteem more highly the judgement of a simple labourer, being one of the elect of God, regenerate by his Holy Spirit, than that of popes, bishops, priests, philosophers and doctors who are infidels and hypocrites'. [1]

He also 'esteemed more highly' the judgement of the local church rather than the wider council, perhaps, says Linder, because he had had bad experience of synodical government in the Bernese Pays de Vaud.[2] At the local level, for the consistory of ministers elders and deacons, he commended annual elections of all but the ministers.[3]

Such are the radical ideas that Jacob and others could find in Viret. Two other spokesmen for the Reformed Church must be briefly mentioned. Both were listened to within the international discussions among Churchmen. Of one it has been said:

> 'he was one of the most articulate and influential of these Reformed thinkers, and yet his political ideas have attracted relatively little attention'.[4]

The other was quoted by Thomas Goodwin and the Five Dissenting Brethren at the Westminster Assembly in their Apologetical Narration, 1644. The first is Peter Martyr Vermigli; the second is Daniel Chamier, 1564-1621.

Vermigli, sometimes simply known as Martyr, was one of those consulted by Frankfort. He fled from his native Italy in 1542 and came to England in 1547 where he taught at Cambridge. From 1556 to 1562 he taught in Zurich. His disciples gathered his thoughts together in a much used book. The Loci Communes, published

1 Instruction Chrestienne, Vol I, p125 as translated in Linder, The Political Ideas of Pierre Viret, p72.
2 The Political Ideas of Pierre Viret, p68
3 The Political Ideas of Pierre Viret, p73 . Beza had insisted on annual elections in the Company of Pastors for his own position as Moderator in succession to Calvin on the grounds that 'he who today held the position satisfactorily would not be so suitable a year later' The Register, P E Hughes, 1966, pp363-4.
4 Robert M Kingdon, The Political Thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli, Geneva 1980, Introduction, p I.

ten years after his death, went into fourteen editions in different countries 1576–1656. As can be seen from Index II in the McNeill edition of Calvin's Institution it is possible to find nearly six hundred cross references between these two works.

Like Calvin, Vermigli uses the classical model of a mixed polity but what is very clear here is his insistence that matters of very great weight should be refered to the people 'as it appears in the Acts of the Apostles'.[1] This means that the Church 'hath a consideration of politke government', which in the 'common weale of Rome' was judged to be 'a government of ye people'.[2] In its aristocratic aspect he wants 'bishops, elders, doctors and others' to be chosen by merit and laments that some of the most distinguished bishops have belonged to obscure sees because prestige is not related to ability.[3]

'Chamier', so we are often told, 'in the name of all the Reformed Churches, allows to the people the approbation of their elders.'. This appears in Thomas Goodwin, 'The Constitution, Right, Order and Government of Churches of Christ'[4] and is repeated in the summary he approved of The Grand Debate concerning Presbytery and Independency by the Assembly of Divines convened at Westminster.[5] Chamier's support was important because of a criticism, voiced for example in an Anatomy of Independency,[6] a commentary on the Apologetical Narration,[7] that Goodwin and four others had signed, that Independency was out of step with Reformed

1 The Political Thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli, p 15.
2 ibid, p 15, 3 Introduction, ibid, pvii and pp 19–20.
4 In The Works of Thomas Goodwin, Lond 1681–96, Vol IV, p 195.
5 Grand Debate, Lond 1652, approved as a true record by Thomas Goodwin and Jeremiah Whitaker. (Bodleian Antiq E 1652-3)
6 Anatomy of Independency, Published by Authority, Lond 1644 (Bodleian, Pamph. C. 63 (7))
7 Printed in William Haller, Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution, 1638–1647, New York 1934, Vol. II, pp.306–39

practice. In April 1644, Robert Baillie referred to a letter from Holland which had given the Apologeticall Narration

> 'a great wound, showing how far their way was contrary to the Word of God, to the Reformed Churches and to all sound reason'. [1]

But was there not more than one way of being 'Reformed'?

Between those who are labelled either 'Presbyterian' or 'Independent' there were many debates, and many of these about details. The subject is a thesis in itself and has been so treated in a number of recent studies:

> 'the line separating religious Presbyterians and Independents is often tantalisingly vague and indefinite',

says Philip Anderson (1979).[2] Of general interest here is the fact that the debate itself, carried on for the most part through pamphlets and petitions, is evidence of enormous public participation. There was also in the end a ' vote '. Independency, as some of Dale's contemporaries liked to remember, proved more popular with the people than Presbyterianism.[3]

1 The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, David Laing editor, Edinburgh 1841, Vol. 2, p. 147. Letter April 2nd.

2 Philip James Anderson, Presbyterianism and the Gathered Churches in Old and New England, 1640-1660, Unpublished Oxford D.Phil. Thesis, Oxford 1979, p. 129; Rosemary Diane Bradley, Jacob and Esau 'Struggling in the Womb', A Study of Presbyterian and Independent Religious Conflicts 1640-1648, Unpublished University of Kent Ph.D. Thesis 1975; Rosemary D. Bradley 'The Failure of Accomodation in Religious Conflicts between Presbyterians and Independents in the Westminster Assembly, 1643-6', Journal of Religious History, Vol. 12, June 1982, pp. 23-57; R.B.Carter, The Presbyterian-Independent Controversy with Special Reference to Dr Thomas Goodwin in the years 1640-1660, Unpublished Ph.D. , Edinburgh 1961; David Walker, 'Thomas Goodwin and the Debate on Church Government', JEH, Vol. 34, No. 1, January 1983, pp. 85-99.

3 Alexander Mackennal, Sketches in the Evolution of English Congregationalism, London 1901, pp. 216f. with reference to a comment by Louis du Moulin, 1606-1680, -only the pastors favoured Presbyterianism, people in general favoured Congregationalism. Mackennal says du Moulin's arguments have been used by Congregationalists for 200yrs. See also Anderson, supra, pp, 34, 110

There was almost unanimous agreement between Independents and Presbyterians that lay people should have a real part in the election of ministers and in the councils of the Church.[1] Samuel Rutherford wavered a little on this except when he was arguing with Bellarmine. Then it was clear that the people had a right to choose ministers and that Bellarmine was wrong.[2] Was it enough,too, to have 'a speaking aristocracy in the face of a silent democracy' ? Many 'Independents' said'yes'.[3] There were many such points to be settled. These remain of interest because they unsettled later minds and go some way to explaining the difference in emphasis that one finds in Peel or Micklem, Dale or Forsyth.

Dale was neither advocate nor opponent of women's rights in State or Church yet this was discussed by some Church men and women in the seventeenth century.[4] Samuel Rutherford in a pamphlet debate with Thomas Hooker said that to interpret 'Tell it to the church' (Matthew 18) as meaning tell all the congregation and not just the elders was ridiculous for the congregation included women and children. Hooker did not intend this. He had already explained that 'the wise God hath included the votes of women in

1 James L Ainslie, The Doctrine of Ministerial Order of the Reformed Churches of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, Edinburgh 1940, pp, 87-102, 153

2 Samuel Rutherford, Professor of Divinity at St Andrews and Scottish adviser to the Westminster Assembly, The Due Right of Presbyteries. On p. 128 he argues that the prophets and apostles were not elected. On p. 205 he argues with Bellarmine.

3 Anderson, Presbyterianism and the Gathered Churches (1979), p. 77, a quotation from Samuel Stone, Thomas Hooker's colleague at Hartford. Richard Mather defended this.

4 Keith Thomas,'Women and the Civil War Sects', Past and Present, Vol. 13, 1958, pp. 42-55

the male'.[1] John Robinson, on the other hand, did believe that 'one faithful man, yea or woman either, may as truly and effectually loose and bind'.[2] And certainly very effective was the Mrs Katharine Chidley who may have been the author of the Women's Petition of 1649.[3]

Peel, like Dale, and much to the displeasure of Micklem , made much of the text 'where two or three are met together in my Name..' This argument too has a long history. Thomas Edwards lists it as 'Error 142' that 'six or seven gathering themselves into a covenant and church' could claim a complete and independent power of government.[4] Robert Baillie complained that the Brownists 'require no more than seven to a full and perfect congregation'.[5] Samuel Rutherford[6] and William Rathband[7] also find 'seven' too low to be competent, the more so if they were also all illiterate. As with the charges against the followers of Morely, it is easier to name the accusers than to find the defenders. Few Independents, if any, really wanted tiny churches. Their point was rather to defend the rights of congregations which by necessity were reduced in numbers. Katherine Chidley said a church could subsist for a certain time without officers but her argument was this: a steward is expected to provide food for the family but must a whole family starve because the steward neglects his duty ?[8]

1 Quoted in Samuel Rutherford, A Survey of the 'Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline'penned by Mr Thomas Hooker, Lond 1658, p. 254.

2 John Robinson, Works, edited by R Ashton, London 1851, II, p. 158

3 See Ian Gentles,'London Levellers..' JEH 1978 p292

4 Thomas Edwards, Gangraena, 2nd,enlarged edition, Lon 1646 p32.

5 Robert Baillie (or Baylie), A Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time.. , Lond 1645, p 23.

6 Samuel Rutherford, A Survey of the 'Survey', 1658,p 424.

7 William Rathband (alias W.R.), A Brief Narration of Some Church Courses held in Opinion and Practice in the Churches lately erected in New England, Lond 1644,p 3; Thomas Welde, An Answer to W.R. , Lond 1644 pp. 23-7.

8 Katherine Chidley, A Justification of the Independent Churches of Christ, Lond 1641 p. 3.

John Owen was against a proliferation of little churches in one town. If practicable 'all believers in one place should join themselves in one congregation'. [1] He also considered that a properly constituted church should have more than one elder - it is seldom that one man has all the necessary gifts, he says.[2]

Peel would ask whether even one elder or minister was essential to constitute a church, and both he and his critics could find support in these earlier debates. And whom should we regard as the spokesmen for sixteenth and seventeenth century Independency? Geoffrey Nuttall, for example, once referred to Owen and Goodwin as 'doctrinaire, second generation' Independents because they put more emphasis on the ministry and the sacraments than Henry Barrow or John Robinson.[3] An even earlier view, claiming support from Calvin,[4] might seem to be more'clerical' than 'catholic' tradition. Laymen, and even more emphatically laywomen, should not baptise, even in emergencies. Baptism could be safely delayed and proper attention given to Church order. A church might also exist, as many Independent churches did exist, without celebrating communion, because they lacked a minister. Lay celebration or a church without sacraments were propositions much more attractive to Peel than to any major sixteenth or seventeenth century'Congregationalist'.

1 John Owen, Eshcol, London 1648, 'Advertisement to the Reader', the fourth of four rules.

2 John Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, London 1689, p. 166

3 Geoffrey F Nuttall in a debate with A.J.B.Higgins, CQ, 1946, pp. 124f, 263f, 363f.; Also Nuttall, TCHS, Vol. XIV, No. 4, 1944, pp. 197-204 and esp. p. 203; Visible Saints, Oxford 1957, pp. 86f. See also R.Newton Flew, editor, The Nature of the Church, London 1952, Chapter VIII, 'The Congregationalists', esp. pp. 175-6

4 Calvin, Institution (1559), IV/15/20-22; Stanley H Russell, A Study of Augustine and Calvin of the Church regarded as the Company of the Elect, Unpublished Oxford D. Phil. Thesis, Oxford 1958, p. 272 on baptism and Calvin.

After Dale most Congregationalists had once again to become interested in synodical government. The subject had been debated once with the 'Presbyterians' in the seventeenth century and would be resumed by Micklem and his contemporaries in the long negotiations for the United Reformed Church. As explained by John Cotton, at stake in the argument were the prerogatives of all the members of the church. In the foreword to John Norton's The Answer he lamented that 'a double portion of the episcopal spirit' was resting on the heads of fellow elders so that, he means, each side acted like arrogant prelates. They were agreed on almost everything but this:

> 'the acts of government which you wish to have performed by synods, these we seek to have given over by the synods to the churches and performed by the churches with synodical.. correction.'. [1]

Elsewhere his specific objection is to 'acts of Church-power put forth by the elders of churches over absent congregations'. [2] Thomas Goodwin feared that a 'representative church' was not only distant from the members but weaker in its bonds with Christ. Where, he asked, 'is Christ said to have a representative body of His Body ? ' There was no objection to consulting wider councils. On the contrary Goodwin said:

> 'we judge synods to be of great use for the finding out, and declaring of truth in difficult cases, and encouragement to walk in the truth, for the healing of offences, and to give advice unto the magistrate,'. [3]

The suspicion was of any coercion plus a fundamental conviction

1 John Cotton in The Answer, ET by Douglas Horton, Harvard 1958, p15. For Norton's own view see p 67.

2 John Cotton, The Way of the Congregational Churches Cleared, Lond 1648 p 94.

3 The Works of Thomas Goodwin, Lond 1681, Bk. V, pp 217-9, 211. John Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, 1689, p 265f said that when the state of the Church was weak nothing was more to be feared than synods. One example of a bad synod was the Council of Trent.

that Christ had given 'all that Power and Authority' necessary for their work directly to the local congregation and that, in the often quoted words of The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, 1658,

> 'besides these particular Churches, there is not instituted by Christ any Church more extensive or Catholique entrusted with power for the administration of his Ordinances, or the execution of any authority in his name' .[1]

It could be that this type of 'congregationalism', as well as being thought to be inspired by Scripture, might also be a rather indirect product of Morely's own policy of decentralisation. Kingdon suggests there could be a link between Morely and the Remonstrant Church in the Netherlands.[2] Others have asked what lessons such men as the 'Dissenting Brethren' of the Apologeticall Narration learned from their sojourn in Holland. Berndt Gustaffson thought that Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Sidrach Simpson, Jeremiah Burroughs and William Bridge, all of them exiles in Holland in the 1630's and members there of Reformed churches, learned from the Remonstrants the advantages of appealing to the civil magistrate over agains synods in ecclesiastical disputes.[3] A more recent study by Robert Norris supports this view.[4] A minority church like the Remonstrants in Holland or the Independents in England in the 1640's would simply be outvoted in a Reformed Church synod. Practical considerations

1 Article VI of the 'Institution of Churches' and Article IV on Power and Authority, A G Matthews, editor, The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order; Lond 1959, pp 121-2. The document was of course the product of a synod and in the Preface (ibid p60) it is regretted that churches had not met together more often or at least corresponded.

2 Robert M Kingdon, Geneva and the Consolidation.. pp 125f. The Remonstrants in 1633 adopted a basically congregationalist polity.

3 Berndt Gustaffson, The Five Dissenting Brethren, a Study in Dutch Background of their Independentism, Lund 1955.

4 Robert Norris, 'Some Dutch Influences upon the Independents at the Westminster Assembly' in JURCHS, Vol 2, No. 6 Oct 1980, pp 177- . Also of some relevance here is J Lindeboom, Austin Friars: History of the Dutch Reformed Church in London 1550-1950, The Hague 1950. eg p. 9 emphasis on democratic form.

could help to decide Church practice . They explain why American Congregationalism developed synods while some English Presbyterians became more congregationalist.

At the time one commentator said that the dispute between the Independents and the Presbyterians 'doth at most but ruffle a little the fringe, not any way rend the garment of Christ ' .[1] Agreement would be reached, although only temporarily , in 1691 in the Heads of Agreement assented to by the United Ministers in and about London.. and the price to be paid for such ministerial arrangements was a passive laity, expected to give consent, not to argue or decide.[2] Not until 1972 would English Presbyterians and most Congregationalists in England and Wales feel able to be joint members of one United Reformed Church. The wider divisions which even the Westminster Assembly might have helped to heal still elude , or evade , reconciliation even though government by elected synods is part of the practice of the Church in England.

But what about the Church Catholic and its government that Calvin had set out to reform ?

> 'Let Rome glory of the peace in, and obedience of her children, against the Reformed Churches for their divisions...whilest we all know the causes of their dull and stupid peace to have been carnal interests....Ecclesiastical Tyranny, by which she keeps her children in bondage to this day . ' [3]

1 Charles Herle, publisher, in the preface to the Apologeticall Narration , Lond. 1643.

2 See article 7 of this pamphlet, Heads of Agreement, Lond.1691.

3 Preface to The Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order, 1658 edited by A G Matthews, Lond. 1959 p 62.
Albert Peel thought the preface was attributed to John Owen but Geoffrey F Nuttall, Visible Saints, p.16 n 5, disputes the evidence for this.
Cf Calvin, ' Letter to Sadolet ' , Theological Treatises p242 the tyranny of the Roman pontiff and pp.255-6 a defence for stirring up strife where all was 'perfect peace' .

Even in 1658 , as the Preface to the Savoy Declaration at-least hints , the debate with Rome was not over . No one did more to prevent the arguments between Independents and Presbyterians from being a little squabble on the fringe of Christendom than that enormously erudite and fair-minded critic of his opponents, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542- 1621) .

I doubt if he has ever before been thanked , certainly not by a Nonconformist ! In his own communion he was persona non grata until this century and his writings prescribed because of his views on the limited and indirect power of the Pope in temporal matters . He was at last recognised as a Doctor of the Church in 1930.[1] The Anglican , J Neville Figgis in 1897, recognised his political importance and possible influence on John Locke - not exactly a democrat but an important forerunner of modern democratic theory .[2] Yet Locke[3] was educated at Christ Church under that leading Independent , John Owen, so that Owen and the Independents , Bellarmine and the Jesuits, share the credit for Locke's important theory of an original

1 New Catholic Encyclopedia, Washington D.C. 1967.

2 J N Figgis, TRHS New Series, Vol. XI, London 1897, pp 89-112, 'On Some Political Theories of the Early Jesuits '. More recently see Quentin Skinner, The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Cambridge 1978, Vol. 2, p.137, 162-3, 174-5 on Bellarmine and Locke. Skinner notes p.174 but does not wholly accept that Bellarmine has been praised for 'revealing the true sources of democracy'.

3 For Locke see DNB. His tutor was Thomas Cole, another Independent minister. Also Geoffrey F Nuttall, Visible Saints, Oxford 1957, p.76f. Locke's 'social contract' would, notes Nuttall, 'become the foundation-stone of the Whig tradition'. It was used to justify the English Revolution of 1688.

contract between the people and their rulers . Today it is still possible to write about John Owen without reference to Bellarmine ,[1] something that Owen himself like many other eminent Churchmen once found impossible to do [2]. To a contemporary who had little sympathy for the finer points of ecclesiastical discussion Reformed Churchmen and Jesuits were both in the same dangerously democratic league:

> 'Upon the grounds of this doctrine, both Jesuits and some zealous favourers of the Geneva discipline have built a perilous conclusion, which is " that the people or multitude have power to punish or deprive the Prince if he transgress the laws of the kingdom. '

and on this point this defendant of the divine right of kings, Sir Robert Filmer , added :

> 'Cardinal Bellarmine and Mr Calvin both look asquint this way. ' [3]

There was nothing 'asquint' about the way in which Bellarmine , officially commissioned to refute the heretics, looked on Calvin in his Disputationes. He quotes the Institution so frequently and so fully that a later Jesuit has said that anyone reading Bellarmine could gain a good summary of Calvin's teaching for Bellarmine treats the Genevan with great respect - he is said to have kept a portrait of Calvin in his study.[4] And anyone reading John Owen's discussion of the election of ministers and other such questions in his posthumously published The True Nature of a Gospel Church (1689) will find there more references to Bellarmine than to Calvin . But beneath the

1 There are no references to Bellarmine in Peter Toon, The Life and Work of John Owen , Exeter 1971 .. .

2 Fifteen eminent Protestant divines, among them six bishops , are said to have attempted to refute Bellarmine . Opponents included William Whitaker, George Downame, Matthew Sutcliffe, each of whom mentions Bellarmine in the title of their books.

3 Sir Robert Filmer, Patriarcha c 1638 - 40 , edited by Peter Laslett, Oxford 1949, p 53, 54.

4 James Brodrick S.J., The Life and Work of Blessed Robert Francis Cardinal Bellarmine S.J., 1542 - 1621 ., London 1928, two volumes, Vol. I , p 165. Brodrick published a shorter , less hagiographic account, Bellarmino, London 1960.

English text are signs of an extremely learned and very thorough debate conducted in the international language of Latin . The clue is Owen's brief acknowledgement of David Blondel (1590-1655).

> 'But the testimonies in following ages given unto the Right and Power of the People in choosing their own Church Officers, Bishops and others , recorded in the decrees of Councils , the writings of learned men in them , the prescripts of Popes, and Constitutions of Emperors , are so fully and faithfully collected by Blondellus in the Third Part of his Apology for the Judgement of Hierom. about Episcopacy , as that nothing can be added unto his diligence , nor is there any need of further confirmation of the truth in this behalf. ' [1]

In short, he might have said that Blondellus reads like a catalogue. In the heat of the argument Bellarmine is mentioned on almost every page[2] and if these references are pursued - and Blondellus gives chapter and verse though not always accurately - we find that Bellarmine 's major discussion is with Calvin's Institution . Sometimes, as was noted earlier in the case of the Council of Laodicea , there is a mutual inquiry as to what Calvin meant.[3]

Bellarmine entitles one of his chapters 'Quod Ecclesia gubernatio non sit dimocratia '[4] . He can find not one word in Scripture to support the idea of people creating bishops or presbyters. Everywhere in Scripture 'populus vocatur grex , qui pasci debeat'[5]. Or on the basis of John 21; Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5, he states 'populi sunt oves' [6]. If Acts 1 and the

1 John Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, London 1689, p 81. Blondellus or Blondel was a French ecclesiastical historian, author of a defence of the Reformed polity , De la Primauté en l'Eglise 1641. He was educated at the Geneva Academy, prefered to be a pastor but was persuaded at last to be a professor in Amsterdam in 1650.

2 Blondellus, Apologia pro Sententia Hieronymi de Episcopis et Presbyteris, Amsterdam 1646 pp 382, 387-9, 473-507.

3 Apologia pp 485-6 ; Bellarmine 'De Clericis', Lib. I,Cap.VII.

4 Bellarmine, Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei adversus huius Temporis Haereticos, Ingolstadt 1588 , Primus Tomus, i, 'De Romani Pontificis ' Lib.I, Cap. VI.

5 ibid

6 Disputationes, Primus Tomus, ii , 'De Clericis' Lib. I, cVII.

the election of Matthias are quoted Bellarmine maintains that if the people did take part this was only 'concessione Pontificum '.[1] He disputes Calvin's evidence that in the early Church the appointment of ministers 'sine suffragio populi'was void and asserts that if Cyprian did consult the people this did not make them joint rulers with him.[2]He thinks that he and Calvin are agreed in opposition to Protestants like Illyricus in giving more power to 'coetui seniorum' than to the'plebi ' and gives passing praise to the Republic of Geneva.[3]Blondellus thought Bellarmine could accept popular election in the State but not in the Church and found this puzzling.[4]But Bellarmine had also half quoted Aristotle that democracy was the worst form of government.[5] He did indeed require all his skills to argue with the proverbial Jesuit.

1 Bellarmine, Disputationes I, pars ii 'De Clericis' cap. VII (p.311): Cf. John Owen, Gospel Church, p.64

2 Bellarmine, Disputationes, 'De Clericis' c VII; Calvin, Institution IV/v/2;'De Romani Pontificis'c VI

3 Disputationes, 'De Romani Pontificis' c.V

4 Blondellus, Apologia, p. 478

5 Bellarmine, 'De Romani Pontificis', c VI. Aristole said democracy was the worst form of good governments but the best of the three forms of bad government. Aristotle, Politics Bk.III,7

For all its inconclusiveness there is something very heartening about this debate. The two sides were at least exploring much of the same ground and had studied each other's findings. The basic difference was that Bellarmine believed that the Church is the perfect kingdom, Christ's monarchy represented by the Pope, with the faithful obedient and passive. Owen has a very clear emphasis on obedience to church officers but even more strongly he insists:

> 'we should do well to take care at the same time we do not encroach upon the Dominion of Christ, by the exercise of an authority not derived from him'. [1]

Part of that Dominical authority were the injunctions he believed he found in Scripture that gave the whole congregation an interest in the admission and dismissal of members and the election of officers. But:

> 'how far the government of the Church may be denominated democratical from the necessary consent of the people unto the principle acts of it in its exercise, I shall not determine'. [2]

He was aware that in the judgement of some 'the government of the Church is absolutely democratical'.[3] Evidently Owen was not, as some might say, a follower of Morély but neither could he agree with Bellarmine.

1 John Owen, The True Nature of a Gospel Church, pp.41, 42, 162, 209. Quotation p. 31

2 True Nature of a Gospel Church, p.162

3 True Nature of a Gospel Church, p.137. Owen does not mention Morély but the phrase looks like an allusion to views associated with him. Morély was more often mentioned by his English critics than sympathisers.

But neither could later Roman Catholics who are anxious to rediscover a place for'Lay People in the Church'. In Congar's massive and pioneering study, poor Bellarmine is almost reduced to a footnote and rebuked for being too much the child of his time in not seeing that the laity have a part in forwarding the work of God's kingdom and a place in the Church.[1]

In the decades from Bellarmine to Dale, from Owen to Newman, there would be less debate more of restatement to explain to Dissenters what Dissent was all about. Occasionally there is the satirical challenge like Daniel Defoe's The Shortest Way with the Dissenters (1702).[2] Even in the more sombre, practical works with their eighteenth century sounding titles, Isaac Watts', The Rational Foundation of the Christian Church (1747), we can still discern some ecumenical setting. On the subject of votes and majority rule, Watts states a preference for a two-thirds majority and cites the election of a Pope and 'the conclave of cardinals at Rome who are supposed to have the wisdom of this world...Why may not Christians learn the wisdom of the Serpent from the men of the world ?'.[3] And his comments and advocacy of people exercising their judgements about the teaching they hear from the pulpit makes us aware that the debates between

1 Yves Congar, Lay People in the Church, ET, London 1965, pp. 49, 359

2 See also his, The Dissenters Answer to the High Church Challenge, London 1704, which inter alia calls for 'the episcopal hierarchy to be reduced to such a pitch of authority as may be justified by the Scripture. p. 21 Daniel Defoe was a Presbyterian.

3 Isaac Watts, The Rational Foundation of the Christian Church, London 1747, pp. 62-3

Independents and Presbyterians did not just 'ruffle a little the fringe' of the garment of Christ but concerned his very nature. Bernard Manning would argue, to be challenged by Frederick Powicke, that Presbyterians in the eighteenth century more easily succumbed to Unitarianism because, unlike the Independents, their members had no corporate responsibility for the doctrines they heard in their pulpits.[1] In the next century, John Henry Newman, Anglican turned Roman Catholic and ministering in Dale's Birmingham, would concede that the laity had sometimes been more faithful than the clergy in matters of doctrine and so therefore had a claim to be consulted.[2] The debate about the people's part in Church government would always be a matter for the whole Church.

Micklem claimed that the Oxford Movement acted like a 'gadfly among the Nonconformists'.[3] Dale's High Churchmanship was one response, Forsyth's ecumenism another. Micklem most of all would re-open at least a monologue with Rome. But sadly, centuries after Calvin and Sadolet, Bellarmine and Blondellus, the hope of One Church, Catholic and Reformed remains elusive. May the Reformation debate continue. [4]

1 Bernard Lord Manning, 'Congregationalism in the Eighteenth Century' in Essays in Orthodox Dissent (1939), London 1953, p.187

2 J.H.Newman, On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine Geoffrey Chapman edition, London 1961. This essay first appeared in The Rambler in 1859

3 Ilico in BW, January 3rd 1957, p.4

4 On the subject of continuing debate with Rome the significance of the Second Vatican Council should be noted though it falls outside the activities even of Micklem who died in 1976. For a Reformed response see Laity Number 22, November 1966, esp. pp. 46-9 where the Vatican Decrees on the Lay Apostolate are criticised as too individualistic. Also George B Caird, Our Dialogue with Rome, Oxford 1967, p. 11 'When Rome speaks of dialogue, she envisages a process in which she is ready to listen and learn'.

ROBERT WILLIAM DALE 1829-1895[1]

Since Cromwell the Independents had never been so powerful as in the days of Dale. And in a denomination of pulpit giants and extremely gifted ministers - John Brown Paton, Henry Allon, George Barrett, James Guiness Rogers, Joseph Parker, Alexander Mackennal, Arnold Thomas - Robert William Dale towered just above them all and has become the best remembered. The Congregational Union recognised his gifts when they appointed him one of the youngest to be elected Chairman. He was only thirty-nine. International Congregationalism chose him as its first President in 1891. He is one of Nine Famous Birmingham Men,[2] not more famous than John Henry Newman, but he made much more impact on the city. A life-long, sometimes dissident, Dissenter, most moving tributes to him were offered by Archdeacon Sinclair in St. Paul's and Canon Charles Gore in Westminster Abbey.[3]

They recognised a great Churchman. Forsyth praised Dale for lifting Congregationalism out of 'Mialism and individualism'.[4] He intended no disrespect 'for that honoured name' but he had made a contrast between Edward Miall campaigning for Nonconformist rights against an Established Episcopal Church, and Dale affirming an alternative Churchmanship. Micklem and Forsyth were agreed that 'Congregationalism at best is High Church or nothing'[5] and for

1 There is a very detailed, 750-page, biography by his son, A.W.W.Dale, The Life of R.W.Dale of Birmingham, London 1899

2 J.H.Muirhead, Nine Famous Birmingham Men, London 1913

3 Life, p.693. Charles Gore later became the first Bishop of Birmingham in 1905.

4 P.T.Forsyth, London Quarterly Review, Vol. CLXXXII, April 1899, Review of The Life of R.W.Dale, pp. 194-221, p. 196. For Miall see Clyde Binfield, So Down to Prayers, London 1977, pp. 101-24

5 P.T.Forsyth, Faith, Freedom and the Future (1912), London 1955, p. 215

this they could give thanks for Dale. Dale's 'High Church - Independency' was commented on in 1873.[1] It was, I think, prompted by the Oxford Movement. Nearly twenty years before he published his Manual of Congregational Principles (1884) Dale had joined in the controversy between Dr Pusey and Cardinal Manning. In an article on 'Anglicanism and Romanism' he distinguished between genuine Churchmanship and fussiness about 'decorated altar-cloths.. picturesque prostrations, priestly mystery and the wondering admiration of silly women'.[2] One of the books referred to in the Manual, Lyman Coleman's A Church without a Prelate (1844) commended the simplicity of the Primitive Church 'in opposition to the polity and ceremonials of the higher forms of prelacy'.[3] The First Vatican Council was also bound to elicit some response.[4] The cumulative effect, according to John Stoughton, surveying the first fifty years of the Congregational Union, was that by 1881 Congregationalists had their attention turned 'more distinctively and extensively to fundamental principles of Church government'.[5] It was the Union that asked Dale to write the Manual.

The Union did not quite approve of the result. Particularly in the estimation of the Communion Dale discovered a higher Churchmanship in the Savoy Declaration (1658) than in the Declaration adopted by the Congregational Union in 1833, which spoke very subjectively of the Sacrament as a 'token of faith in the Saviour and of brotherly love'. Against this Dale preached 'The Doctrine of the Real Presence' and an objective theory of

1 The Congregationalist (edited by Dale), Vol. II, 1873, p. 55

2 The British Quarterly Review (edited by Henry Allon) April 1866, pp. 281-338

3 A Church without a Prelate, London 1844, p. iii

4 See The Congregationalist, 1872, pp. 641f

5 John Stoughton, Reminiscences of Congregationalism Fifty Years Ago, London 1881, p. 77. An earlier sign of revived interest in the Church was the symposium, Primitive Ecclesia, edited by H.R. Reynolds, London 1870-1, to which both Stoughton and Dale contributed, Dale 'The Doctrine of the Real Presence' and 'The Idea of the Church'.

the Atonement.[1] His theology on both these subjects has remained a matter of controversy.[2] But Congregationalists of a wide spectrum of views could not take exception to his obvious zeal to commend Congregational principles and encourage his fellow Churchmen to take pride in their own history. Goaded into response by the Oxford Movement he may have been but no one could accuse him of being unCongregational. So it was that Peel in 1926 was still commending Dale's Manual -'no better text book than Dale's could be found'[3] - and telling readers of his A Brief History of English Congregationalism (1931) that if they wanted more information they would best find it in Dale.

Dale has his own assured place in the history of the second half of the nineteenth century, a Free Church spokesman in days when Dissenting grievances still occupied a large proportion of Parliamentary time. He was of course, like almost all Dissenters, a Liberal, a colleague in particular of Joseph Chamberlain and one of that select group of Nonconformist ministers and laymen who occasionally took breakfast with Gladstone.[4] But for all his working life his chief work was to be a pastor in one church to one city.

Forsyth thought this was a mistake. Dale did the work of three men in three professions. He was 'too large a man for the charge of a single congregation and should have accepted a college presidency'.[5] On the other hand a member of his own

1 The section on the Sacraments was excluded from later editions of the Manual.

2 See John K Gregory, Understanding the Lord's Supper, 1850 to the Present Day, Unpublished Oxford D.Phil thesis, Oxford 1956
S.J.Mikolaski, The Nature and Place of Human Response to the Work of Christ in the Objective Theories of the Atonement advanced in Recent British Theology by R.W.Dale, James Denney and P.T.Forsyth, Unpublished D.Phil Thesis, Oxford 1958

3 CQ, 1926, p. 3

4 G.I.T.Machin, Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1832-1868, Oxford 1977, pp. 325-9

5 Forsyth, London Quarterly Review, April 1899, pp 198-203

congregation recalled in 1927 that 'his own people knew and loved him as a devoted pastor and inspiring teacher'. There was, he said, a massiveness about his preaching.[1] An old woman who said she could not understand the sermons said she always came for his prayers.[2] Dale ministered in Carr's Lane, Birmingham from 1854 to his death in 1895, first as joint pastor with John Angell James who had been minister there since 1804, and after 1859 as sole pastor. The context of his ministry was an expanding industrial and commercial town that would come to boast of being 'the best governed city in the world', and the sort of town that benefitted most dramatically from the 1867 extension of the franchise. Those who, like Forsyth, think that Dale was wasted on one church overlook one key fact: the way in which Dale himself was 'made in Birmingham'.

John Campbell, who had been Dale's minister when he and his parents lived in London, said in 1860 that some people envying the growth of Carr's Lane might say '0 that we had an Angell James'. But others with equal justice might reply '0 that we had a Birmingham'.[3] Asa Briggs outlines three distinctive features of Birmingham. The dominance of industry in a wide range of trades. The predominance of small enterprises making possible an intimate bond of masters and men, discouraging trade unionism and working-class consciousness. But thirdly its Nonconformity:

> 'For two hundred years Birmingham had been a shelter of Dissent: in Victorian England it became a stronghold' [4]

Statistically, Dissent did not appear so strong, 35% of the

1 H.F.Keep, TCHS, Vol. X, 1927-9, pp. 243-9, 'Dale of Birmingham'.

2 Life of Dale, p. 644

3 John Campbell, John Angell James, London 1860, p. 86

4 Asa Briggs, History of Birmingham, Vol. II, Oxford 1952, p. 1
On Dissent but especially on class consciousness see, Dennis Smith, Conflict and Compromise, Class Formation in English Society, 1830-1914, a Comparative Study of Birmingham and Sheffield, London 1982 . Dissent is allied with a town versus Anglican County gentry conflict. Sheffield was more class conscious than Birmingham, p. 256.

the Church-going population according to the 1851 census, 3,800 Congregationalists compared with 20,000 attending Anglican churches.[1] But the Unitarians were even smaller and Unitarians provided almost all the town's mayors from 1840-80. Dissent could have an influence out of all proportion to its size. The civic gospel that transformed a backward town into a city run on businesslike lines by business men was first preached from Dissenting pulpits by George Dawson, who had preached to Dale, and then by Dale and others.[2] Congregationalists were middle class - as Dale himself accepted to the end of his days[3] - but given the social structure of Birmingham this was not an impediment to ministry to all the people. When the 'agitator' George Holyoake, who had once attended Carr's Lane in the days of Angell James, tried to rouse support in Birmngham in 1868 for working class representation he met with little support in the town.[4] And Birmingham it was said was as Liberal as the sea is salt, and so were the Congregationalists.

None of this background is irrelevant to understanding Dale's exposition of Congregational polity. In the jargon of today, Dale's theology is contextual in the sense that it is the work of a minister of an influential city church who made it his pastoral duty always to understand the social setting and to preach to it.[5] But unlike Dawson, Dale was a Churchman for whom the Church was even more important than politics and the welfare of a city. He was first a theologian but politics

1 Conrad Gill, History of Birmingham, Vol. I, Oxford 1952, p. 374; E.P.Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, London 1973, p. 357

2 Fit and Proper Persons, pp. 62f; Life of Dale, pp. 51-3

3 International Congregational Council, Authorised Record of Proceedings, London 1891, pp. xxix,xxx, Dale's introduction.

4 George Jacob Holyoake, Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life, London 1892-3, Vol. II, p. 149; Vol. I, p. 32 (Carr's Lane)

5 Model examples of his doing this are his thorough reports on foreign visits, Impressions of America, New York 1878; Impressions of Australia, London 1889.

was now about rights and responsibilitities, freedom and order, self-government, education - matters on which the future author of The Laws of Christ for Common Life (1884) would have some interest and an autonomous Church something to teach and/or learn.

Dale and Political Democracy

Born just before the great Reform Bill of 1832, Dale certainly approved of the subsequent extensions of the franchise in 1867 and 1884 but he was no more the radical democrat than most of his Liberal contemporaries. What has been said of them is fair comment on Dale:

> 'The Liberals, flatly, were not democrats; their Reform Bill of 1866 was an exclusion Bill and when they adopted democracy after 1867 for political purposes, they knew neither its feeling nor its justification'. [1]

And being Liberal, this was true of Birmingham. Vivien Hart's comparison of Birmingham, just before the Third Reform Bill, with Kansas shows that there was 'little talk of democracy as an ideal', no use was made of the inspirational symbol of 'the people' and that in 1884 a speaker in Birmingham described 'Democracy' as a subject of comparatively abstract interest.[2] In that year Dale spoke to 'a great and enthusiastic meeting' and noted that the passion for freedom 'still beats in the heart of the constituency'.[3] The 1867 Reform tripled the Birmingham electorate and gave the town three MP's. Dale in a speech to the new electors recognised

1 John Vincent, The Formation of the British Liberal Party, 2nd edition, London 1976, p. xlix. See also Ian Bradley, The Optimists, Themes and Personalities in Victorian Liberalism, London 1980, p. 23 on how political expectations quietened in the 1850's and 1860's.

2 Vivien Hart, Distrust and Democracy, Cambridge 1978, pp. 147,159

3 ibid, p. 150, Report in the Birmingham Daily Mail, March 25th 1884, p. 2

that 'the time will come when a still wider extension of the franchise will have to be asked for and conceded'.[1] He was also aware that practice had not kept pace with theory and there was a problem of a fairer redistribution of seats. He probably did not realise that the complicated process of registration meant that even in 1911 some 40% of all adult males were not on the electoral roll.[2] 100% of adult women were also excluded. This did not seem to trouble Dale.

Dale was not that radical. In 1859 he expressed support for 'calm, thorough, yet moderate reform'.[3] 'Order was as important as liberty to Nonconformists', says Machin (1977).[4] One of Dale's motives for supporting Reform was to avert revolution. Ironically he was once accused (1867) of doing just the opposite: 'Deny the people the franchise and the right of revolution still remains'.[5] Now that the franchise had been offered he felt that this 'must greatly increase the stability and security of the State'. He believed in democracy as a way of making possible a constitutional opposition and procedure for handling grievances. It was better that

> 'the great masses of our countrymen should vindicate their rights by constitutional means than by force',[6]

a perfectly reasonable line of argument that was later to be used by Reinhold Niebuhr.[7] Did he think that giving the vote to women was too great a threat to the existing order, and even a challenge to the conventions of Carr's Lane?

1 The Politics of the Future, November 19th 1867, p. 6

2 Neal Blewett, Past and Present, No. 32, December 1965, pp. 27-56, 'The Franchise in the United Kingdom 1885-1918', p. 29

3 Eclectic Review, April 1859, p. 447

4 Machin, Politics and the Churches, pp. 14-15

5 Life of Dale, p. 255

6 The Politics of the Future, p. 6

7 Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (1941), New York 1964, Vol. II, p. 268. Democratic government has been 'so conceived that criticism of the ruler becomes an instrument of better government and not a threat to government itself'.

In May 1867, John Stuart Mill, MP for Westminster, sought to exclude the reference to manhood suffrage so that women might also have the vote.[1] From 1871-1883 annual bills on women's suffrage were introduced to Parliament and lost.[2] It is clear from his expositions of The Epistle to the Ephesians (1882) that Dale was aware of the feminist movement. He refers to a book by Frances Power Cobbe, The Duties of Women (1881). She asks if Paul had been wrong about slavery might he not be equally wrong about the subjection of women. Dale explains that it is the Prayer Book that is wrong, not Paul but refuses to be drawn on the political question. If his fear was of social and political upheaval, he might have been reassured by Frances Cobbe's note in an earlier essay that for two hundred years the Quakers had treated women as equal without any obvious disruption.[3] In the Manual (1884) Dale added this footnote:

> 'A generation ago there were Congregational churches in which only men members had votes in Church Meeting; this restriction has now generally disappeared'.[4]

It had not quite disappeared in his own church. After 1872 women could vote for the election of deacons but no woman became a deacon until 1920. Women had not been able to vote for Dale's appointment in 1854 though they had registered their approval. They were still disfranhised by the same Trust Deed in 1906. There is no evidence that Dale felt strongly enough to campaign on this issue. As the historian of Carr's Lane confessed:

> 'Carr's Lane was no doubt exceptionally conservative in this matter, but tardiness in giving equal place to women in Church government was a blot on the very great contribution of Nonconformity to the development of democracy'.[5]

1 Hansard, Third Series, May 20th 1867, pp. 817, 844
Congregationalist MP's Baines, Hadfield and Fawcett supported Mill.

2 Patricia Hollis, Women in Public, London 1979, p.282

3 Dale, Lectures on the Epistle to the Ephesians, London 1882, pp. 352f.
Frances Cobbe, The Duties of Women, London 1881, p. 102;
Frances Cobbe, Woman's Work and Woman's Culture Josephine Butler, editor, Essay I, 'The Final Cause of Women', London 1869

4 Manual (1884), p. 173

5 Arthur H Driver, Carr's Lane 1748-1948, Birmingham 1948, p.45
Dale did commend the appointment of deaconesses as a way of giving official recognition to women's work. Minutes, February 1878

The practice at Carr's Lane was the more unjust given the higher proportion of women to male members. At the Church Meeting that called Dale to the co-pastorate in 1854 (July 10th) 222 men were unanimous in their vote, 268 women could only signify their approval. In 1872 women outnumbered men as Church members by 462 to 209.[1] Before this, in 1860, women had gained the vote in municipal elections. In the 1870's they could join school boards or poor law boards. In 1888 they could vote, but not be voted for, in county elections. At last in 1928 women had the vote on the same terms as men.

If Congregationalists in general did not lead the way neither did they lag too far behind. They ordained their first woman minister in 1917 and with no great feeling of innovation. The British Weekly simply noted that the joint ministry of Mr and Mrs Coltman would 'be followed with much interest'.[2] It was only towards the end of Dale's life that the idea of women holding office in the Church was seriously considered. Albert Spicer, Chairman of the Congregational Union in 1893, said that women should be eligible if suitably qualified.[3] Women could now hear him say this for they had been admitted to the Assembly the year before. James Spicer's daughter Harriet had been the pioneer.[4] A Congregational Union report on 'The Ministry of Women' (1936) noted that there were now more than 2,000 women deacons; in 1916 there had been very few.[5] Carr's Lane was therefore fairly typical.

It has been worth dealing at some length with this question not only because of its intrinsic importance but also because after Dale

1 Minutes, July 10th 1854; Annual Report, 1874 on the year 1873.

2 BW, December 13th 1917, p. 219

3 CYB, 1893/4, p. 35

4 Clyde Binfield, So Down to Prayers, London 1977, p. 279, n27.

5 CYB, 1936/7, pp 84-93. In 200 churches the Church Secretary was a woman. 17 women had been ordained since 1917 but it was still more difficult for a woman to find a pastorate.
For an ecumenical survey see Kathleen Bliss (wife of a Congregational minister), The Service and Status of Women in the Churches, London 1952. Dr Bliss, Anglican, wrote this study for the World Council of Churches.

this was no longer an issue for Congregationalists except when trying to convince other Churchmen. Forsyth gave a topical reference to the movement among the women but that was by way of illustration of challenges to authority, not to plead a cause. [1]

= Dale anticipates Forsyth in this concern for authority. Preaching in 1870 to 'retail tradesmen, a large number of young men and women employed in retail shops, and a still larger number of working people',[2] his Sunday evening congregation of the people most effected by the 1867 Reform Act, Dale was anxious about reverence for Law. And Law was closely bound up with Government and institutions.

> 'The most ancient and powerful institutions are no longer sacred. The reverence with which it is natural for the legislative assembly of a great country to be regarded is hardly possible to a generation which has grown up amidst cries for Parliamentary Reform. Who can regard with veneration and awe an institution whose imperfections he has heard attacked on a hundred platforms..? [3]

Parliament had come to represent 'nearly all classes in the state'. He believed that'the great end of government is to enable people to govern themselves'. But he did not believe that Government is simply a social contract. In its function of keeping and administering the Law it belongs to 'the Divine constitution of the world'. [4] Therefore modifications of the instrument of Government should be approached with reverence and respect for hallowed traditions.

> 'True Liberalism does not consist in the incessant attempt to reconstruct from its foundations the political constitution of the State... but in working patiently and quietly towards a noble ideal of national justice, unity, intelligence and freedom, by the gradual modification of existing social and political arrangements... If I thought of the Past with contempt I should think of the Future with despair.' [5]

1 Forsyth, The Principle of Authority (1913), London 1952, Prologuge

2 Dale, The Ten Commandments (1872), Fourth Edition, London 1884, Preface p. v

3 ibid, p. 6

4 ibid, pp. 210-11

5 ibid, p. 135

Less conservative is Dale's comment in Ephesians:

> 'There may be evil in delay as well as in precipitancy, for though no real progress is secured by the destruction of bad institutions while the spirit of a people remains unchanged, bad institutions perpetuate the injustice and cruelty in which they originated'. [1]

Reform an institution, make it more democratic, and you may help to reform a people. Dale would agree with those political theorists - Rousseau, Mill and Cole - who say that democracy is educational. [2] In his premature venture into publishing, The Talents - he was only sixteen at the time - he fondly imagined that equal participation in the life of a commonwealth would put an end to war. But the view expressed then in the educational value of political participation he retained throughout his life. [3] In 1890 he spoke of 'the discipline of intelligence and character which is secured by the discharge of grave public responsibilities'. [4] He told the new electors in 1867: 'the free discussion of political principles and measures is one of the highest forms of national education'. But he also insisted in the same speech on their duty 'to secure the highest possible education for yourselves and your children'. [5] Democracy both educated people and required a people who were educated. In 1890 he said that if people did not have the capacity to form 'sound judgments on large questions of public policy' representative institutions would degenerate into anarchy. [6] Bad government, he commented in Ephesians, is better than no government. [7]

1 Ephesians, pp. 406-7

2 Carole Pateman, Participation and Democratic Theory, Cambridge 1970, pp. 22f, p. 105

3 The Talents, London 1846, pp. 77-9

4 'Christ and the State' (1890), Fellowship with Christ, London 1891, p. 195

5 The Politics of the Future. (1867), p. 2

6 Fellowship with Christ, p. 195

7 Ephesians, p. 400

Dale and Birmingham were at the centre of Nonconformist agitation on the vexed question of State involvement in education that meant also religious education. Into this we need not go.[1] It is sufficient to note that in the State Dale recognised that for the proper working of democracy 'we must educate our masters', as Lowe, who opposed the 1867 franchise, had said. (Dale accepted Lowe's right to have reservations but took this as a challenge.[2]) In the Church Dale preached with the conviction that a democratic polity and a responsible laity required of him a solid teaching ministry.

The influence of the Church on the State was very important to Dale:

> 'A great democratic movement threatens - or promises - to reconstruct not the mere political framework of nations, but their social order and institutions. Is Christianity ..the ally of the old order or the new? Established Churches have resisted the advance of the spirit of democracy; will it find in Christianity itself an enemy or a friend?' [3]

He was concerned that in the eyes of modern democrats, by which he partly means socialists, Christianity is associated with the 'bulwarks of privilege and power'. 'To subjects they have preached submission but they have not preached righteousness to kings.' [4] To his credit he is not over anxious to vindicate Congregationalism as a pro-democratic movement. In this Address (1869) as Chairman of the Congregational Union he is content to say that:

> 'principles for which we and our fathers have so long contended are passing out of the region of abstract discussion into the region of practical politics' [5]

1 See Life of Dale, pp. 267-302; 552-60; 575-83

2 The Politics of the Future (1867), p. 8, the State should provide education for every child not already being educated.

3 'Christ and the Controversies of Christendom' (May 1869) reprinted in Essays and Addresses, London 1899, p. 3

4 ibid, p. 37

5 ibid, p. 2

When provoked by Canon Curteis' statement in the Bampton Lectures[1] (1871) that Congregationalism was not as democratic as was supposed, Dale gives this careful comment on the political aspect:

> 'It is also true that although very few English Congregationalists have held democratic principles in relation to political government, the history of the last three hundred years shows that the connection is not remote between the spirit of Congregationalism and the spirit of liberty'.[2]

But Congregational polity is not primarily about individual rights.[3] 'The polity is the direct outgrowth of great spiritual principles.'[4] It is to these that we shall now turn.

The Rights of the Commonality and the Real Presence of Christ: Dale's Church Democracy

It is very significant that many of Dale's comments on Congregational polity are to be found in discussions of even greater 'spiritual principles'. The Manual originally included teaching on the Sacraments. In his Chairman's Address his prime concern was 'Christ and the Controversies of Christendom'. In 'The Idea of the Church' his central concern is 'the communion of saints'. It therefore irritates Dale when people treat the Congregational Churches as:

> 'nothing more than an organisation for keeping improper persons from the Lord's Supper, and for securing the election of well qualified ministers and deacons'.[5]

1 George Herbert Curteis, Dissent in its Relation to the to the Church of England, Bampton Lectures, Oxford 1871, London 1874

2 Dale, Review of Curteis on Dissent, The Congregationalist, Vol. I, 1872 p. 626

3 For his emphasis on duties rather than rights see The Laws of Christ for Common Life, London 1884, pp. 187-203, 'Political and Municipal Duty'

4 The Congregationalist, 1872, p. 626

5 'The Idea of the Church in Relation to Modern Congregationalism' first published in Ecclesia, 2nd Series 1871, reprinted in Essays and Addresses, London 1899, pp 89-177, p. 142

Nobody would have been prepared to be imprisoned or hanged for being a Congregationalist just because:

> 'Congregationalism gave them the power to choose their own ministers, and to control, according to their own tastes and wishes, the conduct of worship and all the affairs of the Church. [1]

There was something more fundamental at stake than these privileges. Yet polity is important. Granted, he said in introducing his Manual (1884), there are millions of heathen to be preached to, 'the hungry to be fed and the naked to be clothed', questions of domestic, commercial and public morality to be tackled, and then perhaps there will be time enough to debate the respective merits of Episcopacy, Presbyterianism and Congregationalism. Nonetheless, and here we come back to his conviction about political reform:

> 'the responsibilities which rest upon the citizens of a free municipality...discipline some of the most robust and generous virtues... The connection between organisation and life is never accidental or arbitrary. ..The principles of the Congregational polity.. determined the organisation of the apostolic churches, and are intimately related to some of the greatest truths and facts of the Christian faith'. [2]

So, from May 1881, at the request of the Union, Dale and Dr Guinnes Rogers went up and down the land proclaiming polity:

> 'Methodism is simply anxious to make men Christians: Congregationalism is anxious that men who are Christians should realise in their church life Christ's own conception of what their church life should be'.

For his own very high estimation of what that church life required, he was prepared, if necessary, to be hanged. [3]

1 'Congregationalism -II', first published in the British Quarterly Review, April 1881, reprinted in Essays and Addresses, London 1899, pp. 195-235, p 202

2 Manual (1884), 'Introductory', pp. 1, 3, 4

3 Life of Dale, pp. 352-3 This particular work lasted about eighteen months and immediately precedes the publication of the Manual.

There are three strands in Dale's commendation of Congregational polity. These are closely interwoven but it is useful to disentangle them to see what is distinctive in each. The three are:

1 The Biblical Basis

2 Church History

3 Theological.

(1) Of the four Congregationalists studied in this work Dale is the first and the last to base part of his argument on Biblical texts.[1] And even his use of proof texts, according to one of his contemporary Anglican critics, was sparse. 'Dr Dale's whole case rests on a single text and that text misinterpreted by popular ignorance',[2] an audacious criticism for a curate to make but one which would later be repeated by Micklem in debate with Albert Peel. In a sermon in 1887, in which Dale had provoked the above response by a query about Anglican orders, he said:

> 'For myself I hold fast to the great conception of our fathers. I believe that where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ there is He in the midst of them... investing their decisions with His awful authority'.[3]

This 'single text', all or part of Matthew 18, 15-20, is appealed to in every one of Dale's five Congregational principles so that the Manual almost becomes a commentary on

1 John W Grant, Free Churchmanship in England 1870-1940, London 1954, p. 71 No generation after 1870 believed that Independency was the polity of the Bible

2 H.W.Holden, Brought to Book: Dr R.W.Dale, London 1887. (This pamphlet contains part of Dale's sermon and Holden's reply) p. 38

3 ibid, p. 3. Dale's sermon was also published in CW, March 31st 1887

Matthew with other Biblical texts drawn in to reinforce the exposition. One of the first Congregational churches, that at Plumber's Hall in 1567, had 'appealed to the well-known passage in Matthew 18, 15-18... as showing Christ's mind about the discipline of the Church'.[1] Dale follows in this tradition in 'The Idea of the Church' (1871),[2] his second article on 'Congregationalism' 1881,[3] then in the Manual, and finally in his [illegible] address at the opening of the First International Congregational Council, 'The Divine Life in Man' (1891),[4] and in other writings. In turn he reinforces a tradition. Alexander Mackennal said in 1901:

> 'When we would assert the sanction of Scripture for our polity, we commonly appeal to the words of Christ: "Where two or three are met together in my name.." '.[5]

The text is prominent in later manuals such as thoseof Goodrich (1894)[6] and its successor, Ernest J.Price's, A Handbook of Congregationalism (1924).[7] It is also, as already indicated, the key text in Albert Peel.

The attraction is obvious; the legitimate interpretation of the passage not quite so clear. Christ speaks of the Church in only two places in the Gospels, and both in Matthew. Congregationalists were less inspired by Matthew 16, 18 unless Peter, the rock on which the Church is built is seen as simply representative of the Church's faith. In the

1 'The Early Independents', in Congregational Union of England and Wales Jubilee Lectures, Vol. I. London 1882, pp. 1-56, p. 7

2 Essays and Addresses, 1889, p.99

3 ibid, p. 214

4 Fellowship with Christ, London 1891, pp. 343-68, p. 360

5 Alexander Mackennal, Sketches in the Evolution of English Congregationalism, London 1901, p. 70. On p. 64, Mackennal also notes Richard Fitz's use of this text,1567

6 Albert Goodrich, A Primer of Congregationalism, London 1894, p. 97

7 A Handbook of Congregationalism , pp. 19-21

Reformed tradition from Calvin to Karl Barth the text has been seminal. Calvin found there Dominical procedure for Church discipline.[1] His disciples, as we saw in the preceding chapter, would query whether 'tell the church' meant 'tell the elders' or 'tell the congregation'. Barth uses the text more widely in a section in his Church Dogmatics, 'The Order of the Community'.[2] Now that another Reformed writer, Eduard Schweizer,[3] and later scholars, have helped us to distinguish different Church polities in each of the Gospels, it could be claimed that Congregationalists feel most at home in Matthew's church. 'One is your Master, (Mt. 23,9) even Christ, and all ye are brethren' seems to suit the ethos of a 'democratic' Church and is accordingly much quoted.[4]

How does Dale interpret and apply Matthew 18, 15-20? It is Christ's will that 'all those who believe in Him should be organised into churches'.[5] Christ declared that he would be with them and confirm their decisions.[6] Its prayers are His. The 'in My name' Dale expounds as the third Congregational Principle, 'that all the members of a Christian church should be Christians'. Only those who were Christians could take part in decisions involving discipline where the final sanction is to relegate a member to 'the community of unbelievers'. 'If any Christian society includes in its membership those who are not "in Christ" the power attributed to the Church must be diminished.'[7]

1 Calvin, 'Articles concerning the Organisation of the Church and of Worship at Geneva' 1537 in Treatises (1954) pp. 51f

2 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (ET 1958), IV/2 pp. 698-709

3 Eduard Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, (1959) ET London 1961

4 CUEW, Short Tracts for the Times on Church Principles, Number 2A, London 1890, p8 and in local church manuals

5 Manual (1884), Principle I 6 ibid, pp. 10, 11, 36

7 ibid, pp 41f

It is 'the will of Christ that the Church should have regularly appointed officers'.[1] But we learn from Matthew 18, 15-20, corroborated by I Corinthians 5, 1-13 and II Corinthians 2, 1-11, that 'the Church as a whole was responsible to Christ for the exercise of church discipline'.[2] Such authority vested by Christ in the local congregation makes it 'independent of external control', civil or ecclesiastical.[3]

Thus Matthew 18, 15-20 which can be read as primarily about winning back an erring brother, and about praying together,[4] is used as a general principle giving Dominical support to details of Congregational polity. But in the middle of the third century Cyprian made 'the presence of a Catholic bishop' rather than the 'presence of Christ in a Christian assembly...the essential thing'.[5]

But Biblical texts must not be applied legalistically. 'It was a noble and, perhaps, a necessary error' of the Puritans to insist on proof texts for ever detail of polity.[6] 'The real struggle was not about the meaning anf force of texts'.[7] Texts help us to see the 'Idea of the Church' but the absence of an explicit Biblical statement is not fatal to Dale's way of arguing. For example, he can accept that:

> 'Of the manner in which the "elders", "bishops", or "pastors" of the apostolic churches were elected to office there is no record in the New Testament '.[8]

1 Manual, p. 51 2 Manual, p. 57

3 Manual, p. 69, Principle V

4 See for example, Eduard Schweizer's commentary The Good News according to Matthew (1973), ET London 1976

5 Dale, History of English Congregationalism, edited by A.W.W.Dale, London 1907 (2nd edition), p. 16

6 Manual, pp. 36-7

7 'Congregationalism, I ', Essays and Addresses, p. 194

8 Manual, p. 54

Instead one makes a reasonable assumption:

> 'considering the place and function of the commonality of the church in apostolic times, it is reasonable to assume that the men who were appointed to office were in every case appointed with the consent and concurrence of the church'. [1]

Here Dale agrees with Samuel Davidson, The Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament Unfolded, (1854). In the Manual Dale shows that he has consulted many commentators on Scripture. On the controversial Acts 14,23 he cites Calvin, Beza, Erasmus, Owen, Doddridge, Mosheim, Neander, Coleman, Meyer and Davidson. He also refers to an article on ordination by Edwin Hatch in The Dictionary of Christian Antiquities. Hatch and Davidson disagreed with Calvin and the others listed. Acts 14.23 does not give 'direct support to popular election'. [2]

Davidson, like his text, was controversial and merits a minor digression. Nearly a decade after his Congregational Lecture on Ecclesiastical Polity (1847) was first published, he was at the centre of a crisis about the Higher Criticism provoked by his The Text of the Old Testament Considered (1856). He resigned as a professor at the Lancashire Independent College. John Angell James, Dale's predecessor and co-pastor, was among those who urged the acceptance of his resignation. In the background of the controversy were many other differences of opinion, including the Biblical basis of Congregationalism.[3]

1 Manual, p. 55

2 Manual, p. 68, Note II

3 John Lea, 'The Davidson Controversy, 1856-1857', in Durham University Journal, Vol. LXVIII (New Series Vol. XXXVII), December 1975, pp. 15-32; R. Tudur Jones, Congregationalism, London 1962, pp 254-7 for further comment on Congregationalists and Higher Criticism. Dale in 1869 said the real controversy was about the authority of Christ, not 'the historical untrustworthiness of a few chapters here and there in the Old Testament'. CYB, 1869, p 15 . Davidson's own comment on the controversy is apt for our subject: 'Majorities are more often wrong than right..As usual orthodoxy prevails by numbers'.Supra p22

Davidson, like Dale, was sure 'the popular will was consulted' but the evidence was meagre:

> 'Regarding the election of office bearers, there are few direct notices in the New Testament... In reviewing these passages (Acts 1, Acts 6, Acts 14,23, 2 Cor. 8, 18) every attentive reader must be forcibly struck with the paucity of the evidence in favour of the popular rights'. [1]

Dale does not note that Davidson was also critical of the use made of 'where two or three'. Some of the conclusions drawn by Congregationalists from this text were 'suspicious', in particular when it was used to justify the competence of very small churches. [2]

And yet, despite all the concessions he feels he must accept and make, Dale's Manual of Congregational Principles is a thoroughly Biblical treatise. There are numerous references to Acts, detailed discussion of the Pauline churches, and, in the first edition, a thorough study of officers of the Church in the New Testament. Why? Dale concedes that even if Congregationalism is the polity of the apostolic churches, there is no reason why its organisation should be 'enforced on the churches of all countries and of all times'. What was right for the first century might have been totally unsuited to the third. [3] But like Calvin, although he says he has ceased to be a Calvinist, he thinks it virtually impossible to improve on the fundamental characteristics of the New Testament Church.

1 Samuel Davidson, The Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament Unfolded, second edition, London 1854, pp. 154-5

2 ibid, pp. 104-5. Davidson disagrees in particular with John Cotton.

3 Manual, pp. 4-5. The question how far the Church is free to adapt its apostolic polity is discussed in 'The Idea of the Church', Essays and Addresses (1899) pp. 108f

(2) Dale's second strand in the argument is his interpretation of Church history. The History of English Congregationalism begins with the first disciples. If in the apostolic Church even the newest convert from paganism was treated as a responsible member of the body; if the apostles had taken the great risk of not controlling but letting the church members decide, what excuse can there be for the Church in later ages depriving the 'commonality' of the rights and responsibilities they once had?

> 'The whole congregation of the faithful was responsible for the whole life of the Church- for its faith, its worship, and its discipline.' [1]

But very soon Church history becomes the story of rapid decline in the status of the laity. It takes Dale only thirty three pages to cover the first fifteen centuries. Even Cyprian is quickly dismissed. His talk of consulting the presbyters and the laity is negated by the exalting of the episcopal office.[2] But it was the people's responsibility and they are to blame:

> 'The people lost their rights because they had lost both the capacity and the disposition to perform their duties'. [3]

The History is an unfinished work, edited and posthumously published. A.W.W Dale adds a note at this point which fairly expresses his father's conviction: 'Clerical despotism will be able to prevail only when the doors of

1 R.W.Dale, History of English Congregationalism, completed and edited by A.W.W. Dale, second edition, London 1907, pp. 4-5, Cf. 'The Idea of the Church' (1871) Essays and Addresses, pp. 90-1

2 History, pp. 9, 16

3 History, p. 11, Cf. 'Congregationalism II' in Essays and Addresses, p. 201, where Dale quotes Henry Barrowe who also blames the people 'upon a superstitious reverence and preposterous estimation unto their teachers' A Brief Discoverie of the False Church, (1590) p. 3

For a more recent comment on Cyprian and the people which supports Dale see Hans von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the first Three Centuries, ET London 1969, pp. 265f.

the Church have been forced by a mixed multitude'. He added :

> 'The hierarchy gains strength in proportion as living piety declines. On the other hand, a Church composed of earnest, active Christians, well instructed in divine things, is a self governing Church. [1]

The quotations are from a French Reformed scholar, Edmond de Pressensé , The Early Years of Christianity (1869), a man not quoted by Dale himself but highly regarded by others in England including Alexander Mackennal. [2]

Whoever was to blame for usurping the prerogatives of the 'commonality', the people or the hierarchy, all was not completely lost. Expressions of the true 'Idea of the Church' survived in the Middle Ages in ' free spiritual associations' [3] and can be found throughout the Church from meetings of the Society of Friends to Wesleyan class-meetings. [4]

The Reformation was the great recovery of the claims of the commonality:

> 'for several centuries before the time of Luther the Pope had been usurping the powers and prerogatives of the episcopate, as the bishops had already usurped the powers and prerogatives of the commonality of the Church'. [5]

Dale says nothing about the Conciliar Movement, a very significant omission for Dale has nothing much to say about wider Councils. [6]

1 Life of Dale, p. 13; E de Pressense, The Early Years of Christianity, iv. 7-8

2 Pressensé ministered in Paris during the 1848 Revolutions and became much involved in the democratic movement. He was a firm advocate of the separation of Church and State. Notice par Theophile Roussel, Memoires de l'Académie des Sciences de L'Institut de France, Tome XIX, Paris 1896, pp. 177-225; Alexander Mackennal, The Witness of Congregationalism, London 1887, p.12

3 History, p. 26

4 'The Idea of the Church', Essays and Addresses, p. 91

5 History, p. 35

6 This was the Presbyterian, T.W.Manson's chief criticism of Dale in The Church's Ministry, London 1948, pp 93-4

Neither has Dale anything to say about Calvin. Luther is the Reformer and he is pleased to note:

> 'To Luther Congregationalism was the ideal polity; but, as he thought, the time had not come for instituting it' [1]

Luther wanted a Church in which ministers were 'elected by the suffrages of the people' and where the people exercised discipline on the basis of Matthew 18, 15-20 but he had 'not the requisite persons for it'. [2]

With Robert Browne congregationalism appeared to be a practical polity. Dale notes both the emphasis on discussion and on democracy in Browne:

> 'It was agreed "that any might protest, appeal, complain, exhort, dispute, reprove, etc, as he had occasion, but yet in due order"... In other words, there were to be meetings of the Church for free conference'. [3]

Such meetings, whether of a whole church or of many churches, were superior to church officers in authority:

> 'The voice of the whole people, guided by the elders and the forwardest, is the voice of God'. [4]

Dale is a good historian in giving a fair report of what was thought by Browne, Barrowe and others but he is not uncritical. He does query the assumption of equality that seemed to gloss over 'moral idiosyncracies, and differences of intellectual power'. [5] Was there, too,

1 History, p. 43

2 History, pp. 39, 43; 'Congregationalism , I' (1881) in Essays and Addresses, p. 184 . Dale's references to Luther are from secondary sources. For Luther we can now consult Helmut Lehmann, editor, Luther's Works, Volume 39, 'Church and Ministry', Philadelphia 1970, pp. 303-314

3 History, p. 123, quotation from Robert Browne, A True and Short Declaration, p. 20

4 History, pp. 121-2 , quotation from A True and Short Declaration, p. 3

5 'Congregationalism, II', in Essays and Addresses, p. 200

sufficient emphasis on 'the duty of recognising in others the same access to the mind and will of Christ that a man claims for himself'.[1]

In other words, even in the sixteenth century there was a danger of an individualistic emphasis undermining Church consciousness. Although Dale says he agrees with Gladstone that 'individualism in religion' is the 'besetting weakness' of the Evangelicals, resulting in a great indifference to Church polities,[2] there are places where Dale's own interpretation of Protestantism commits the same offence. In Protestantism, its Ultimate Principle (1874) - a work which incidentally was still being printed in the 1920's - Dale is so anxious to argue against the necessity of the mediation of priests, saints, 'the decrees of Councils and the authority of Popes ' that he goes on to say:

> 'if I stand alone, with all Christendom against me, I will receive at first hand the glorious revelation of the infinite love of God'.[3]

But he does say, in the same work, that the objection to Rome is not simply the denial of direct access to God but that Rome has no real doctrine of the Church, only of a priesthood.[4]

The Reformation restored the 'commonality' to their place in the Church but there remained an argument as to the respective powers of officers and congregations. Joseph Fletcher, in an earlier history of Congregationalism, described Browne's brand

1 'Congregationalism, II', p. 200

2 The Evangelical Revival and other Sermons, London 1880, p. 30

3 Protestantism, its Ultimate Principle, London 1874, pp. 77, 35 This work was reprinted in 1928, no doubt because it was felt a still relevant response to the 1928 Prayer Book question.

4 ibid, p. 91

of Independency as 'intra-Congregational Presbyterianism' because of its strong emphasis on the elders, including the pastors. [1] Dale acknowledges this phrase but applies it to men like Francis Johnson in Amsterdam and John Owen. [2] He doubts if Browne and and Barrowe amd Robinson would have been happy with 'the restrictions which were imposed on the constitutional duties and rights of the commonality of the Church by the theory of John Owen'. [3] This gave the people a right of veto over their officers but denied them power to initiate action.

Dale enters into the discussion, which had also become an argument among historians, including H.M.Dexter, as to whether the principles of Browne's polity are 'at all more democratic than those which are asserted by Barrowe'. He finds in nearly all the early Independents a very strong insistence that rulers should rule although he notes, and again queries, the early Independents'conviction that 'every member of the church might be charged with responsibility for every church action'. It was because 'even in those days, churches were rent with violent strife' that Francis Johnson and others heightened the authority of elders. [4]

At this point Dale's historical surveys are very far from being antiquarian and are dealing with contemporary difficulties

1 Joseph Fletcher, The History of the Revival and Progress of of Independency in England, London 1847-9, Vol. 2, p. 117. Fletcher, pp. 46f is critical of Calvin for nullifying the 'liberty' of the congregation by the power given to presbytery and synods, ie. what he terms 'extra - Congregational Presbyterianism.

2 History, p. 202

3 History, pp. 511-12

4 'The Early Independents', Jubilee Lectures, London 1882, pp. 49-53

in the denomination of the sort that had been publicly exposed to the criticisms of Anglicans and others by Dale's honest predecessor, John Angell James. [1] Equally contemporary as history are Dale's comments on the eighteenth century Evangelical Revival. Its blessings are not denied but it brought into Congregational churches vast numbers of people who were indifferent to questions of polity and people whose own religious history had been in other traditions, among them John Angell James himself. James, Dale admits, was not a convert through Methodism but he 'always smelt of that fire'. But many other Congregational leaders were new to the denomination. Thomas Raffles of Liverpool, John Leifchild at Craven Chapel, London, William Jay, life-long minister at Bath, all 'discovered the glory and grace of the Christian redemption at a Methodist service', so Dale once told the Methodists in a sermon on the centenary of John Wesley's death. Angell James had been helped by Methodist meetings.[2] (Dale thought,too,that everyone could be strengthened by Methodist Class Meetings, if these could be transplanted). [3] But the net result of much in Evangelicalism was an ignorance about 'the idea of the Church, for which the early Congregationalists cared so much'. [4] Dale wrote history with a pastoral concern for a rather mixed flock.

(3) The third strand in Dale's advocacy of the democratic polity of Congregationalism is theological. First a

1 John Angell James, Christian Fellowship or the Church Member's Guide, London 1822. Dale's Anglican critic, H. W. Holden, Brought to Book, London 1887, pp. 30f was among those who used James' evidence of deacons as 'the bible of the minister', and over democratic congregations as amunition against Dissenters.

2 Sermon, 'The Theology of John Wesley', preached March 4th 1891, printed in Fellowship with Christ, London 1891, pp. 216-46, p.225

3 The Evangelical Revival and other Sermons, London 1880, p. 32

4 ibid, p. 31

theology of Christ's real, direct and immediate presence in the Church. Forsyth in the following comment is obviously using Dale to illustrate his own concern for authority but it is not a misuse:

> 'To conduct a church as a small democracy was in his view fatal to the very meaning of a church. It was not a democracy but a monarchy. It had no meaning if Christ were not its King, and if its King, were not present and supreme in its practical life'. [1]

The average church, he added, treated Christ as an 'absentee landlord', as a 'memory'. [2] In his teaching on the Lord's Supper Dale, in the name of the New Testament and of the Congregationalism of the Savoy Declaration, repudiates mere memorialism. 'Christ is present at His table...as a Host with His guests'. [3] Christ is present at Church Meeting which for Dale is 'one of the chief means of grace', a place where he breathes a 'Divine air'. [4] This is so because the 'Divine Life in Man' which is given to all men is actually lived in the 'communion of saints'. That 'it must be a power in character and conduct' is 'one of the ultimate principles of the Congregational polity'. [5]

> 'The Church - this is the Congregational ideal - is a society larger or smaller, consisting of those who have received the Divine life; and who, with whatever inconstancy and whatever failures, are endeavouring to live in the power of it.' [6]

This leads into Dale's second point which he elsewhere calls the '"fons et origo" of the whole Congregational movement', that

1 P.T.Forsyth, Review of Life of Dale, London Quarterly Review, April 1899, p. 208; Life of Dale, p564 'democratic' polity.

2 ibid, p. 208

3 'The Doctrine of the Real Presence', Essays and Addresses, p. 398; Manual (1884), pp. 153-4

4 'The Evangelical Power of a Spiritual Fellowship', Address to the Congregational Union 1886, reprinted in D. Macfadyen, editor, Constructive Congregational Ideals, London 1902, pp. 129-44, p. 136

5 'The Divine Life in Man', Dale's Address as President of the First International Congregational Council, 1891, in Fellowship with Christ, London 1891, p. 357

6 ibid, p. 360

'the members of a Christian Church should be Christians'. [1] Dale has no wish to impose definitions of being Christian or tests of membership. Churches may differ on details and modify their procedures in the light of experience. [2] But in view of the responsibilities placed in the hands of all the members, each member needs the assurance that he is 'surrounded by men and women who dwell in God'. [3]

> 'The Church - the whole Church - is responsible for the people who are received into membership and retained in membership; for the order of worship; for the substance, at least, of the teaching which is given to the Church itself, and which is given in the name of the Church to the people outside.' [4]

Dale knows that to some this seems preposterous. Do 'tradesmen, mechanics, farmers, ploughmen, and serving men, women harassed with household cares' have sufficient competence ? Yes, says Dale, if 'they are all taught of God'. Indeed not only is the 'Christian Church a perpetual witness for democracy' it may even reverse the normal gradations of rank. [5] Certainly it is true that:

> 'The Lord's Supper reminds us that the scholar and the peasant, the rudest and the most cultivated, are all one in this great matter of salvation'. [6]

Once, when walking in the Lake District with an Anglican friend, Dale was asked if 'the shepherds of Patterdale' could constitute themselves a church and discharge its full responsibilities.

1 'Congregationalism, I', Essays and Addresses, p. 185

2 ibid, pp. 187-9

3 Constructive Congregational Ideals, edited by D. Macfadyen, p. 136

4 'Congregationalism, II', Essays and Addresses, p. 203

5 ibid, pp. 205-6

6 Manual (1884), p. 146

Dale replies:

> 'Great natural sagacity, high intellectual culture, however admirable, are not essential: It is enough if, when they meet, they really meet in Christ's name - but no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost'.

It would be 'wiser' for the twelve shepherds to join themselves to another local church but if they are Christians they have the competence to be autonomous. [1]

The discussion touches Dale's doctrine of the ministerial office. Dale assumes that each church will have officers. He also thinks that though Nonconformists protest against every form of 'priestly assumption', they do not 'resent the wise, firm and moderate exercise of the authority of their church officers'. This has been so at Carr's Lane. It may not always be so true, he admits, in smaller churches. [2] But he is remarkably consistent in following through with his basic principle of a fundamental equality of all Christians in the presence of Christ. He did not wish to be called 'Reverend'. [3] He refused the offer of a DD.[4] Anything approaching one-man rule was bad for the church and bad for the minister. There is a discipline of learning to share responsibilities. Besides, a one-man ministry is not Scriptural. In each apostolic church there were several 'bishops' and several deacons. [5] He commends, what the United Reformed Church now calls, an 'auxiliary ministry' with more 'lawyers, merchants, tradesmen'

1 The Congregationalist, Vol I, 1872, pp. 4-6; Life of Dale pp. 247-8

2 The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church (1865), London 1871, p. 281

3 The Congregationalist, 1874, p. 666, 'Why I ceased to use the title "Reverend" '.

4 Life of Dale, p. 514. He accepted an LLD as less presumptious

5 The Jewish Temple, p. 281

helping smaller churches. [1] The man who could tell his fellow ministers that in busier times they might be lucky if they could get six or seven hours a day in the study, [2] who was opposed, as Forsyth would be, to any laicising or undervaluing of the gift of the Ministry, wanted equally boldly to declare:

> 'I decline to be a party to that atrocious conspiracy against the prerogatives of the commonality of the Church, which has invested the life of the priesthood with a sacredness that does not belong to the life of the people. We are all Christ's servants though we have to serve him in different ways'. [3]

And his confidence in the good Christian shepherds of Patterdale was rooted in the knowledge that:

> 'before now, fishermen have known more about divine truth than rabbis, high priests and statesmen' . [4]

Dale expected much from the man in the pew : 'we shall never have a really learned ministry until we have a more learned Church'. [5] He did not assume that every member of his congregation was an MA, [6] but he did believe that among people less qualified than himself there was ' a keen interest in public affairs and in current theological controversies'. [7] Above all there was the Christian experience of people living, or trying to live, holy lives:

> 'The biography of saints is a higher authority than the decree of Councils... For me, the doctrinal authority of the Church lies in the experience of the Church. Its experience constitutes its authority - the experience of the commonality of those who have received the Christian redemption' [8]

Perhaps if the great Councils had been more representative of the commonality, less politically manipulated, Dale would have had

1 The Epistle of James and other Discourses, London 1895, p. 293

2 Nine Lectures on Preaching, London 1877, p. 112

3 ibid, p. 251

4 The Jewish Temple, p. 283

5 CUEW Chairman's Address, October 1869, separately printed as a pamplet, The Holy Spirit in relation to the Ministry, the Worship and the Work of the Church , London 1869, p. 28

6 The Living Christ and the Four Gospels, London 1890,Preface

7 ibid

8 Christian Doctrine, London 1894, p. 308

a more positive view of them.

Church Democracy in Practice at Carr's Lane: Discussion v Devotion.

In ninety years Carr's Lane Meeting House knew only two ministers, John Angell James and Robert William Dale. The two men illustrate two contrasting concepts of the people's part in Church government. A life-long deacon who had known both said of Dale: he 'allowed more freedom of discussion than we had been used to'. [1] Discussion, it will be remembered, was one of the features of Browne's Churchmanship noted by Dale.

John Angell James had a constant fear of schism in the church.

> 'I could never hear of two of our members disagreeing without some anxiety lest the little undulations of the disturbed surface should spread wider and wider... Peace has ever been the object of my almost painful solicitude.' [2]

He was relieved to be able to say that in half a century 'we have never had one divided, or even troubled Church Meeting' but had been able to resolve, elections of deacons, the choice of a co-pastor (Dale), the erection of two successive chapels for the expanding congregations, and various difficult cases of Church discipline.[3] If Dale after forty years had chosen to reminisce in the same way he could not have said the same, as the Minutes of the Church Meeting make abundantly clear. [4]

James' chief antidote to the risk of schism was to reduce

1 Mr E. Mander, deacon, quoted in Life of Dale, p. 509

2 John Angell James, Jubilee Sermon, September 9th 1855, in The Works of John Angell James, Vol. III, pp. 197-8

3 ibid, Jubilee Sermon, p. 203

4 The Minutes are now in the City of Birmingham Library.

discussion:

> 'As little discussion as is really possible should take place at Church Meetings... Nothing but the most obvious necessity should induce an individual to utter a syllable... Taking assemblies soon become disorderly'. [1]

In his very popular The Church Member's Guide (1822) James gave advice to pastors on 'The Mode of Conducting Church Meetings'. He notes that because they are potentially troublesome some pastors dispense with them altogether just as King Charles I had done with parliaments. That is wrong. James defends popular government. It is for pastors to tell their congregations that the chief purpose of Church Meetings is 'for devotion and not for debate'. [2] The minister takes the chair. The minister decides the agenda. He brings the business he thinks it right the church should consider and particularly on delicate cases of Church discipline will use his discretion as to where it is better not to do so. He is to act like 'the judge upon the bench', explaining every case, showing how 'the Scripture bears upon the points and to what decisions the church should come'. Church Meeting may, of course, disagree with the pastor's judgment but it too must have Scriptural reasons for doing so.[3]

A restatement of such views can be found in Dr George Payne's The Church of Christ Considered (1837). Angell James' son in editing his father's works refers to this book and Payne himself had quoted James to the effect that Independency is not democracy. [4]

1 The Church Member's Guide, in Works, Vol. XI, p. 389

2 ibid, pp 387-9

3 'Pastoral Claims Stated', A Sermon addressed to the Church assembling at Livery Street, Birmingham, November 16th 1827, in Works, Vol. II, pp. 102-3

4 George Payne, The Church of Christ Considered, London 1837, p. 80
John Angell James, Works, Vol. XI, London 1861, p. 382

Payne talks of the 'wholesome desire of repressing democracy' though, like James, he wants to avoid the opposite danger of ministerial despotism and 'lording it over the flock'.[1] The minister best serves the church by applying and executing 'the laws of Christ'. 'The church is bound to act on his judgment and direction unless they can prove that he has misdirected them'.[2] Thus it is assumed that nearly all questions that come before a Church Meeting can be resolved by reference to Scripture. The consequence is that ministers, as experts in the Bible, will in most instances direct the decisions of the Church for it would be a bold member who would presume to have equal knowledge. It was because this was the status ascribed to ministers in the Puritan tradition that Perry Miller in Orthodoxy in Massachusetts (1935) denied that Congregationalism in New England was democratic.[3]

The George Payne, John Angell James tradition has one other feature of interest. It is a further reminder that considerations of how a church should be governed were of interest to the whole Church. Payne was also arguing against a Presbyterian, Dr. Andrew Dick, A Dissertation on Church Polity (1833).[4] The argument was of course about Presbyterian claims. But if we read Dick we see that he in turn was provoked into writing by 'the High Church clergy' whose,in many ways commendable,desire for greater autonomy for the Church could, given their view on the priesthood, lead to a clericalised Church. This prompts Dick to say that had the Church of Scotland been reformed as John Knox had hoped it would have been one of 'the purest democracies the

1 George Payne, The Church of Christ Considered, p. 59 ; James, Works Vol. XI, p. 383

2 Payne, ibid, p. 62

3 Perry Miller, Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, Cambridge, Mass. 1933, pp. 37, 168, 173, 176; Ralph Barton Berry, Puritanism and Democracy, New York 1944 acknowledges the important role of the elders but finds a much more pro-democratic emphasis in American Puritanism. See also Albert Peel's Introduction in Albert Peel and Leland Carlson, eds, Cartwrightiana,Lond. 1951,p. 18

4 Payne, ibid, pp. 81, 94; Andrew Dick, A Dissertation on Church Polity (1835), second edition, London 1850, p. 121. July 1833 marks the beginning of the Oxford Movement to which Dick refers.

world ever knew'. [1] In other words, there were some in the Reformed tradition who were proud that their Church was associated with democracy. And in fact, if we look more carefully at the reasons for George Payne's reservations, we find that his real anxiety is about the difficulty of reaching an unanimous decision unless there is real leadership in a democratic meeting. [2] This was the same concern that Calvin had voiced in his comments on the Council of Laodicea. [3]

Dale, I am sure, thought that John Angell James erred in exercising too much control over Church Meeting but he is too diplomatic to say so.. In his The Life and Letters of John Angell James published only two years after James' death he discreetly included this critical comment from T.S.James:

> 'As to Church polity, he wished as much Presbyterianism introduced into Congregationalism as is compatible with its remaining Congregationalism... His fear of discord and debate induced him often to arrange matters before hand with the influential members to a degree which.. was scarcely consistent with the system'. [4]

Dale himself says that in the thirteen years during which he attended Carr's Lane under James' ministry he never knew any of James' proposals to Church Meeting being challenged, let alone defeated, but he adds:

> 'it would have been strange if in a fifty years' pastorate he had not acquired the hearty confidence of the church in his wisdom and justice. He maintained his influence by not abusing it'. [5]

1 Andrew Dick, A Dissertation, p. 121

2 George Payne, The Church of Christ Considered, p. 111

3 See previous chapter

4 R.W.Dale, editor, The Life and Letters of John Angell James, London 1862, p. 367

5 The Life and Letters, p. 283

We may wonder. What about the occasion when James chose to hold a Church Meeting to decide on a new church building project on Christmas Day because he felt that members would be in a benevolent mood? The very loyal R.W.Dale simply records the incident without comment.[1]

John Angell James told the Church Meeting in 1854 that he never entered the pulpit without offering a prayer that the church might be united in the choice of his successor. He believed that the congregation had an 'indubitable right in the choice of a pastor' but he made no secret of his desire to help them in that choice. He did not wish to 'influence your choice beyond what is proper'.[2] But he made no secret afterwards of the fact that Dale was his choice as well as their's. With hindsight we are bound to agree with the minister's and people's decision.

Dale did allow much more discussion than the members had been used to. Mr. Mander was right. And this discussion included whether he should stay in Birmingham. Three times in his first six years this question was considered.[3] His ministry was controversial. A course of sermons on Romans offended an older minority of so called orthodox Calvinists. They also offended his senior co-pastor, John Angell James, but James protected him.[4] Later, when in sole pastoral charge, there were difficult cases of Church discipline. A deacon disagreed with Dale on such an issue and resigned. Church

1 Life and Letters of John Angell James, p. 115

2 Minutes, July 10th 1854

3 Minutes, October 20th 1859; there was a question of his moving to Manchester in 1857 or to Melbourne in 1862. See Minutes, December 4th 1857 and June 23rd 1862.

4 Life of Dale, pp. 113-4

Meeting supported Dale but was by no means unanimous. Dale proposed that a committee of other local Congregational ministers and members be called in to adjudicate and report.[1] This was agreed - an interesting example of 'classical' Independency's use of wider councils or synods for advice. This one issue in the end involved the resignation of two deacons and took from January 1861 to April 1862 to resolve. It was, therefore, very important that the Church Meeting on June 23rd 1862 could be described as 'very numerous' and that it 'carried by a large and enthusiastic majority' a resolution telling Dale how very necessary it was that he should stay at Carr's Lane. Church Meeting also reminded Dale of John Angell James' prayers about his successor, and how they felt 'the blessing of God so obviously rested' on their unanimous decision.[2] So Dale stayed in Birmingham until the day he died in 1895.

Even after this, Dale, unlike James, did not always get his own way. He would have liked to have an assistant. His son, and biographer, thinks he should have made this a condition of staying.[3] The Minutes of a Church Meeting thirty years later note that the principle was agreed.[4] A question of free sittings versus pew rents also took some time to decide. The matter appears to have been debated in the Deacons' Meeting at intervals over eight years.[5] Such dilatoriness puts any kind of democracy in a bad light and could be used as an argument against. There was one occasion, however, when Dale was particularly proud of the Congregational Church

1 Minutes, November 1861. On the question of an internal inquiry into the dispute, Church Meeting was divided: 10 for, 24 against. The external inquiry committee reported on January 31st 1862

2 Minutes, June 23rd 1862

3 Life of Dale, p. 183

4 Minutes, February 4th 1892

5 Minutes of Deacons' Meetings, 1859- (also in Birmingham City Library), July 25th 1882, September 1890.

polity even though the vote in Church Meeting went against him: -

> 'It was a perfectly beautiful meeting. The respect and affection of the people for myself, personally and officially; their resolute determination to walk in the light which came to them; their sense of immediate responsibility to Christ; their consideration for those who differed from them, touched the ideal. It is a night on which I look back with thankfulness and joy'. [1]

Dale is sharing this memory with Charles Silvester Horne, ten years after a meeting in 1882. The Minutes hardly do justice to the occasion. In a mere twenty six lines they simply recall that Dale was outvoted on his proposals that : 'a conscientious belief that the obligation of the Lord's Supper is not permanent is not a bar to membership' of the Carr's Lane Church.[2] A candidate for membership evidently had doubts about the authenticity of the command 'Do this in rememberance of me' as a Dominical warrant. It is remarkable that a 'High Churchman' like Dale, with his clearly stated convictions about the importance of the Communion, should be able to sympathise and support such a conscientious reservation and commend greater tolerance here on the terms of Church Membership.[3] The members took a different view. Dale's proposal was lost. The Minutes do not give the voting figures but in his letter to Horne Dale says he was 'beaten at the Church Meeting by a vote of ten or twenty to one'. And yet 'a perfectly beautiful meeting'.

Participation in Church Meetings was important to Dale and he made some effort to increase it. Albert Peel discovered that Dale

1 Life of Dale, p. 364

2 Minutes, August 30th 1882. Members are normally received into the Church at the next Communion Service. At the next Church Meeting it was reported that in view of the vote the candidate no longer wished to join.

3 Dale did expect greater conformity from candidates for the office of deacon.

might have been one of his illustrious predecessors had the Church Meeting at Clapton Park, London, in 1871 been better supported. He needed a lot of convincing that it was right for him to leave Birmingham. Dale asked for details of the votes cast. The membership was 470; 158 had voted for him, 6 against:

> 'I cannot very well resist the impression that, if there is no strength of hostility to the invitation, there is no general eagerness in its support'. [1]

By contrast, John Angell James felt moved to say of the Carr's Lane Church Meeting that had called Dale to the co-pastorate in 1854:

> 'never was a meeting more delightful, more cheering... could it be anything but the work of omnipotent Grace that could lead between 900 and 1000 hearts to feel alike in reference to a subject that is almost more likely than any other to originate differences of opinion'.

Only the men were allowed by the Trust Deed to vote. 222 out of 297 men were present and their votes were unanimous. The women unofficially recorded their agreement. [2] As we have noted, in difficult times Dale was reassured by the testimony of such extensive unanimity.

Attendance at Church Meeting was never again so high and often quite low. In the 1861-2 controversy over Church discipline, already referred to, the total of votes on one occasion was only 34.[3] In the election of deacons Dale may have succeeded in increasing the level of participation by the introduction in 1882 of a system of transferable votes. The first time the system was used five

1 Albert Peel, CQ 1930, pp 65f. It was also the church's custom to consult 'heads of families'. 37 were in favour, 5 against. Dale also noted that the number of votes cast did not equal one half of the members in fellowship. Men and women were included in the vote.

2 Minutes, July 10th 1854 and July 28th 1854. The Trust Deed required two-thirds of the male members to be present and voting.

3 Minutes, November 1861

successive ballots were needed to secure the majority required for each candidate. (Some might see in the use of ballots evidence of the politicisation of the Church.)[1] There were then about 300 men Church members. About 180 took part in the voting.[2] Not bad, perhaps, but certainly on other occasions participation was not good enough. Im 'The Idea of the Church' (1871) Dale lamented:

> 'There are many persons who regard the right of voting for the admission of a candidate for communion , and for the appointment of a pastor or a deacon, not as a privilege but as a responsibility from which they prefer to be free'.[3]

The Carr's Lane Manual for the Use of the Church and Congregation 1860) that preceded Dale's Manual of Congregational Principles intended for use throughout the denomination, said briefly but clearly:

> 'The monthly Church Meeting, at which it is expected that every member who can will be present, is held on the Friday evening before the first Sunday in the month at a quarter past seven'.[4]

In his Manual (1884) Dale said: 'Never to be present to vote is to neglect a duty'.[5]

He had, however, some sympathy with those who might be too bored to come again. Sometimes these occasions were 'meetings for the transaction of formal business, in which no rational man can feel any intense interest'.[6] Compared with the many interesting discussions going on in Birmingham and elsewhere in this period the Minutes are decidedly dull, even for minutes. As the historian of Carr's Lane has noted, one can search 'in vain without any indication

1 John Taylor, 'The Survival of the Church Meeting 1691-1901', TCHS, Vol. XXI, No. 2, December 1971, p. 42 notes that ballots were quite common in 'our churches' by 1800 and had been used in some churches before Bentham commended them in politics in 1780.

2 Minutes, May 1882 (it is not clear that only men had the vote)

3 Essays and Addresses, p. 141

4 Manual for the Use of the Church and Congregation at Carr's Lane (1860), p. 18 (Birmingham City Library)

5 Manual (1884) p. 172

6 Essays and Addresses, p. 141

of the remarkable influence that Carr's Lane exerted on the life of Birmingham'.[1] On the other hand, at a more personal level - and Dale would think this more important than the passing of resolutions -, it is obvious that the church meets in a commercial city. Cases of discipline still take up much of Church Meeting time but the failings are not now so much sexual misdemeanours or 'disorderly walking' but the collapse of the Penny Bank, or bankruptcy through speculation without sufficient capital resources. The details were fist explored in a Discipline Committee, but the final decision on suspension from the membership rested with the Church Meeting. One is impressed often by the humanity which regards debt as a sin but appreciates that one can fail in business through no fault of one's own.

'Humanity', the 'fellowship of saints', this is what Dale loved most about Church Meetings. Discussion or devotion - what was their prime function? The Carr's Lane Manual of 1835 made clear the link between Church Meeting and Communion which Daniel Jenkins in Nicklem's day was anxious to revive. The Church Meetings:

> 'are held on the Friday, preceding the administration of the Lord's Supper... It is a family meeting of the household of faith; and the scenes presented there are usually of such deep and holy interest - so peaceful and so solemn - so individually refreshing, andso uniting to the body' [2]

that one missed a great spiritual experience if one was not there. This was Dale's testimony. His most quoted remark 'To be at Church Meeting' is not about a good discussion for he talks about

1 Arthur H.Driver, Carr's Lane 1748-1948, Birmingham 1948, p. 60

2 Manual of the Independent Church assembling in Carr's Lane under the Pastoral Care of Rev. J.A.James, Birmingham 1835, p. 46 (Birmingham City Library)

an atmosphere before'any prayer is offered... any words that are spoken'.[1] His chief concern is certainly not numbers or the proportion of members who attend for in the same passage he says:

> 'If the churches were to lose half their members, but if the rest were manifestly men and women who had seen the glory of God and were trying to keep the laws of the Kingdom of Heaven, the power of the Church over the conscience of the nation would be inevitably increased'.[2]

It is not quantity but intensity that he craves for. 'In our modern churches we see too little of each other.'[3] But it is an intensity for an extensive purpose. The Church is a divine society of which God expects great things:

> 'Churches exist not merely for the consolation and ultimate salvation of their individual members, but that the Divine life which dwells in Christian men - developed and disciplined by common worship, by ethical as well as spiritual instruction, by the atmosphere and the traditions and the public opinion (my underlining) of a society which is the home of Christ and of the Spirit of Christ - may change and transfigure the whole order of the world'.[4]

The Church Meeting was an instrument of that formation of the Church's'public opinion'not least because it was composed of men (and women) who represented a wider public, and who were often told by Dale, and by the Church Meeting, that there was 'a saintliness of the bank, of the exchange, of the newspaper office, of the court of justice... the tradesman, the farmer, the mechanic'.[5]

1 'The Evangelising Power of a Spiritual Fellowship', in D Macfadyen, Constructive Congregational Ideals, London 1902, p. 136

2 ibid, p. 139

3 ibid, p. 136 ; Fellowship, pp. 292-4 ,shared pastoral work.

4 'The Divine Life in Man', ICC Address 1891, Fellowship with Christ, London 1891, p. 364

5 ibid, p. 363

Such preaching proclaims an exalted vision but Dale when he came to write the 'Introduction' to the report of this First International Congregational Council admitted a certain uneasiness. Americans seemed to have a much more 'robust faith' in Congregationalism than the English:

> 'Among ourselves there is, I think, a very great sense of the practical difficulties which obstruct the free and effective working of our polity.... Congregationalism may be the ideal system, but to many of us the actual form in which it exists seems to require very serious modifications if it is to do the work required of it'. [1]

Forsyth felt the same and identified part of the problem as 'granular autonomy' that was not equal to the demands of the hour. The 'robust faith' of the Americans that had so startled the English was encouraged by the better working of their system of Congregational Councils. [2] But Dale was also having second thoughts about the neglect of Calvin. On this too Forsyth would have something very positive to say. Forsyth believed that the problem of 'democratic Churches' could only be solved ecumenically. Dale was not so sure.

1 First International Congregational Council, Authorised Record of Proceedings, London 1891, p. xxviii

2 ibid, p. 103f

Dale of Birmingham and Beyond: The Wider Church

Judged by the Manual, Dale is a local church man. Placed in Birmingham, he is more like a bishop in a small see of missions and churches connected with Carr's Lane.[1] Beyond, he played an active part until his last years in the affairs of the Congregational Union, and in those last years, was an enthusiast for International Congregationalism. He travelled widely on the Continent and made very comprehensive surveys of the life of the whole Church in America and Australia.

As we saw from his own practice in Birmingham, he welcomed the use of wider councils to advise a local church that was in difficulties. He saw the value of County Unions and of the Assembly as forums for discussion although he may have felt thatthe latter was too large to be effective, too exposed to the orator.[2] His personal quarrel with the Union was with its acting as a pseudo-parliamentary body, making political judgments on his Liberal-Unionism versus Gladstone's advocacy of Home Rule for Ireland.[3]

Among the divided denominations we would not now describe him as a union man. There is a Godgiven unity of 'the commonality of every Church in Christendom ' of those who are 'one with each other because they are one with Him' - Dale is here preaching on John 17,22, 'that they may be one'. But he is suspicious of 'the unity of an external ecclesiastical organisation'.[4] He seems to waver between a comprehensiveness that accepts that the 'Idea of the

1 Life of Dale, pp 85-7 ; but he encourages their independence, pp.388f

2 Manual (1884) pp. 180-182

3 Life of Dale, p.585; Nonconformist and Independent, October 18th. 1888. There were Liberals who objected to Home Rule as a concession to democratic and populist pressure. See Ian Bradley, The Optimists, London 1980, pp. 227f. There are many references to Dale in this study. Dale objected to the Church, as a corporate body, risking division on a political issue.

4 'The Unity of the Church' (May 1886), Fellowship with Christ, London 1891, p. 315

Church', by which he means 'the communion of saints',[1] can be realised in very different forms or polities, and a rather sharp rejection of other Churches. A lecture in 1854 on The Pilgrim Fathers upset some Anglicans because Dale had said he agreed with the Independents that a mixed congregation of believers and unbelievers in a parish could not possibly be regarded as a church.[2] He also thinks that 'the Idea of the Church' which must alone be permitted to shape the form of the Church, gives more support to a democratic order than the aristocratic concept of an hierarchy.[3] Diocesan episcopacy, Presbyterian synodical decrees, and the Methodist connexional system are all 'rejected as being a direct or implicit denial of the immediate intercourse between the Church and Christ'.[4] Episcopacy is also dismissed because 'diocesan episcopacy is very unlike the polity of of the churches of apostolic times'.[5] Historically, so Dale thinks, it has tended to inhibit the maturity of the Christian commonality.[6] It is also associated with a sacramental doctrine which is 'corrupt and pernicious '.[7] Of Rome he once noted, it is 'the steady and relentless foe of free thought',[8] although there is a touch of respect, as he bluntly pointed out to Matthew Arnold, that arch-misunderstander of Dissent, that the 'true chiefs' of the Oxford Movement should find their spiritual home in her. 'Outside the Establishment' there is 'freedom to grow'.[9]

1 'The Idea of the Church', Essays and Addresses, 1899, p. 91

2 The Pilgrim Fathers (1854), Postscript as an apology for the offence caused by p. 13; 'Idea of the Church', p. 91

3 'Idea of the Church', p. 114

4 'Matthew Arnold and Nonconformists', Essays and Addresses, p. 269

5 Impressions of America, New York 1878, p. 158

6 Letter, May 25th 1875, to Dr Wace, Life of Dale, pp. 388-90

7 Impressions of America, p. 158; 'The Doctrine of the Real Presence', Essays and Addresses, pp 298-398 discusses Pusey's views.

8 Impressions of America, p. 161. 9 'Matthew Arnold', p. 291 But Dale also took a positive interest in developments of Church Congress, etc. See Congregationalist, 1872, pp. 743f

These may now seem strident assertions, to be echoed by Albert Peel, but to be muted with more humility by Forsyth and Micklem. Yet there is a true Catholic Churchmanship in Dale. He was a friend to many eminent Anglicans,[1] he sent a copy of his book on the Atonement to Newman and treasured his reply.[2] Democracy as a principle was less important to Dale than a democratic practice of listening to all the saints. The Chapel of Mansfield College, his old college of Spring Hill, Birmingham, transplanted to Oxford, with a lot of encouragement from Anglicans like T.H.Green and Edwin Hatch, expresses Dale's deep catholicity.[3] Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Luther, Hooker, Baxter, and many others are commemorated in its statues and stained glass. Dale preached the opening sermon:

> 'We who have erected this College have broken with the polities of the great Churches of Christendom.. but we listen with reverence to the saints of all Churches... We think that they have missed the true conception of the external organisation of the Church; but we, too, believe in the communion of saints and are conscious of kinship with all that have found God in Christ'. 4

Most of these have no memorial. Plain Mr. Dale might have been even happier of the Chapel had some visual testimonial to the faithful commonality. He was after all their spokesman.

1 Those mentioned in the Life of Dale include Dr Thorold, Bishop of Winchester, Dr Westcott, Bishop of Durham, Edwin Hatch, Dr. Wace. He was also deeply moved by the Life of Pusey (p. 699 for Fairbairn's report) and was highly regarded by Charles Gore.

2 Letter from J.H.Newman, the Oratory, Birmingham, July 26th 1875, Life of Dale, p. 325; A.H.Driver, 'On Certain Aspects of John Henry Newman and Robert William Dale', CQ 1946, pp. 31f.

3 Mansfield College Oxford, its Origin and Opening, October 14th--16th 1889, London 1890, p. 32, reference to T.H.Green and letter to Dale about Nonconformity in Oxford. Green was perhaps best described as lapsed Anglican. See Melvin Richter, The Politics of Conscience, T.H.Green and his Age, London 1964, p. 40 on his Puritan and Evangelical Anglican background.

4 Mansfield College, pp 53-78, references to pp. 68-9.

Chapter IV

PETER TAYLOR FORSYTH 1848 - 1921 [1]

Forsyth is Congregationalism's best known twentieth century theologian and the most stringent critic of its democratic ways. He was once too liberal for his denomination, then orthodox in what he called its 'clotted Calvinism'. He became champion of 'the immortal Calvin' and preacher of God the Holy Father in a denomination that had now become liberally vague and considered him reactionary. But always he was a Congregationalist, a minister, and for half his ministry, a pastor:

> 'There was a time when I was interested in the first degree with purely scientific criticism... But, fortunately for me, I was not condemned to the mere scholar's cloistered life... I was kept close to practical conditions. I was in a relation of life, duty, and responsibility for others. I could not contemplate conclusions without asking how they would affect these people, and my word to them, in doubt, death, grief, or repentence' [2].

This was fortunate, or Providential, for others also. A scholar once described The Church and the Sacraments (1917) as the work of a preacher rather than a theologian.[3] Forsyth himself had a higher view of preaching. Some of his most noted work was first preached to very specific pastoral situations .

1 Works about P.T.Forsyth include-
W.L.Bradley, P.T.Forsyth- The Man and his Work, London 1952;
Robert McAfee Brown, P.T.Forsyth: Prophet for Today;
John H Rodgers, The Theology of P.T.Forsyth, London 1965;
Clifford S. Pitt, Church, Ministry and Sacraments, a Critical Examination of the Thought of Peter Taylor Forsyth, Unpublished London PhD. Thesis, September 1976.
There is 'A Memoir' by his daughter, Jessie Forsyth Andrews in The Work of Christ (1910) in the 1938 and subsequent reissues, Fontana, London 1965, pp. 11-29.

2 Forsyth, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind (1907), London 1957, pp. 192-3.

3 Mentioned by Dr J.K.Mozley, 'Preface' (1946) to Forsyth, The Church and The Sacraments (1917), London 1955, p. viii

and was remembered long afterwards because it had been heard so powerfully as a living Word of God. James Vernon Bartlet in 1930 referred to Forsyth's'memorable utterance' at the Boston International Congregational Council thirty one years before, in 1899.[1] This was the sermon on 'The Evangelical Principle of Authority' that had first moved the hearers to a profound silence and then to the spontaneous singing of the hymn 'In the Cross of Christ I glory'.[2] At least two other speakers at the 1930 Council still recalled Forsyth. One made the link with Karl Barth, a parallel that is alleged to have Barth's own approval but is no more than hinted at by Barth's son Marcus in the Congregational Quarterly (1939): 'P.T.Forsyth: The Theologian for the Practical Man'.[3] Practical references illustrate many of Forsyth's themes.

Forsyth ministered to congregations at Shipley, a suburb of Bradford; St. Thomas Square, Hackney; Cheetham Hill, Manchester; Clarendon Park, Leicester, and Emmanuel Cambridge. Dissenters were now being admitted to the ancient universities and denominational leaders felt that Forsyth's learned ministry was just what was needed at Cambridge. There he might have stayed[4] had he not been persuaded in 1901 to take charge of the training of other ministers as Principal of the Congregational College at Hackney. If some of his best known sermons naturally belong to these years as a pastor, most of his books were issued

1 Proceedings of the Fifth International Congregational Council, edited by Albert Peel, London 1930, p. 153. Forsyth also preached at the 1908 ICC on 'Forgiveness through Atonement, the Essential of Evangelical Christianity' . Bartlet was also a speaker.

2 Jessie Forsyth Andrews, 'A Memoir', pp. 20-1

3 Marcus Barth, CQ, 1939, pp. 436-40; A.M.Hunter, P.T.Forsyth, Per Crucem ad Lucem, London 1974, pp. 12-13. Hunter, p. 7 notes Brunner's comment on Forsyth as the greatest of British theologians'.

4 Minute Book 1892-1922 (Emmanuel Congregational Church, Cambridge), pp. 65-6, 82. Forsyth said he did not wish to move again - an indication of his high estimation of the pastoral office.

when he was principal, sometimes indeed as lectures. Yet there are obvious and permanent bonds between the two spheres of action. The sermon on 'the Evangelical Principle of Authority' is expanded into one of his most forceful books, The Principle of Authority (1913).[1] The minister of local congregations who was rejected by two County Unions[2] became for 1905-6 the Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. His theology is always 'in a relation of life, duty, and responsibility for others'.

Like Bartlet, John Whale also spoke of an 'ever-memorable address' and one with such 'prophetic insight that if it were republished today it would be found to have gained rather than lost in relevance'.[3] This was written in 1938 and the speech refered to was Forsyth's Chairman's Address of 1905. The Church, the Gospel and Society[4] was in fact republished in 1962 by which time many of Forsyth's major books had been reprinted three or four times as a response to a post-War revival of interest. Forsyth was hailed by a new generation of Congregationalist leaders like John Huxtable as an 'astonishing prophet'. Older men looking back might say with Nathaniel Micklem:

> 'It interests, and rather puzzles, me to remember that in the twenties Forsyth was regarded as in some ways a reactionary by responsible thinkers who had little sympathy with the New Theology. We see him in clearer perspective now'.[5]

1 The Principle of Authority (1913), 2nd edition, London 1952

2 The Yorkshire Congregational Union and the London Congregational Union, though the latter later admitted him. 'A Memoir' p. 16; Bradley, P.T.Forsyth, pp. 28-36

3 J.S.Whale, 'Foreword' (1938) to Forsyth, The Work of Christ

4 This work in fact contains the two 'Chairman's Addresses delivered in May and October 1905.

5 BW, December 18th 1952 in a comment on the book by a Mansfield man, Robert McAfee Brown, P.T.Forsyth: Prophet for Today, Philadelphia 1952. This work also gives a balanced account of Forsyth's understanding of, and opposition to, the New Theology of R.J.Campbell, ibid, pp. 26-30

'Reactionary' is an understandable, if rather superficial, description of Forsyth. He is in the books we now read reacting against his own earlier liberalism with all the passion of a man who has had first to convince himself. If, as Dale said, he recovered for us the word Grace,[1] this had been first a personal rediscovery, described in that rare autobiographical page in Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind: 'I was turned from a Christian to a believer, from a lover of love to an object of grace'.[2] It is, as I shall argue, only because democracy as a form of self help is so at variance with Grace as God's gift that he 'reacts' so fiercely against current democratic assumptions. Reaction, as he says in The Person and Place of Jesus Christ can be a positive activity of reconstruction on more secure foundations.[3]

Most commentators have noticed[4] - how could they fail to - Forsyth's anti-democratic comments: 'the more the democracy acquires control, the more urgent is the question what is to control it',[5] or on 'the brief sovreignty of spiritual man',[6] or again: 'how the democracy does hate a man who is a rebuke to it'.[7] Such blows are aimed from many different contexts and not simply when Forsyth is wrestling with The Principle of Authority. 'Democracy' is on his mind. But no one, I think, has really assessed his criticisms in the light of his thoroughly corporate and

1 After reading Forsyth's essay 'Revelation and the Person of Christ' in Faith and Criticism (1893)

2 Positive Preaching(1907), 1957,p.193

3 The Person and Place of Jesus Christ (1909), London 1951, p.26f

4 Bradley, P.T.Forsyth, p.69; Pitt, Church,Ministry and Sacraments (Thesis 1976) p.114

5 The Church and the Sacraments(1917), 1955, p.11

6 The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p.27

7 Socialism, the Church and the Poor, London 1908, p.21

and participatory understanding of the Church and pride in the Reformed tradition.

Forsyth: Reformed Churchmanship and Participation

> 'Luther mortgaged Protestantism (under whatever necessity) when he dropped the Independency that at first seemed, even to himself, the direct corollary of his faith, and put his movement under the aegis of the princes of the day. Calvin offered much more support to a self-governing Church.' [1]
>
> 'A State Church is no comfortable home for the liberty that is in Redemption, or the autonomy that is in Christ.' [2]

Luther's 'Independency' had been commented on by Dale but Dale had said almost nothing about Calvin whom he only began to appreciate in his last years. Forsyth from his Cambridge ministry onwards recovered Calvin from Calvinism and its narrow, restricting orthodoxies that had so oppressed him in Yorkshire to the point where, in Faith,Freedom and the Future(1912) he could commend 'The New Calvinism'.[3] The more democratic emphasis he attributes in these lectures to Anabaptist influence - an historical judgment which was queried in the second chapter - but Calvin, as he says, was in sympathy with 'a self-governing Church'. Calvinism nurtured that resistance to tyranny in contrast to the docility and Teutonic obedience which Forsyth, writing during the First World War, sees as such a tragic consequence of Lutheranism:

> 'If the extravagance were allowed, it has been one of the misfortunes of Lutheranism never to have executed a king, as France and England did to be free'. [4]

1 Faith, Freedom and the Future (1912), London 1955, p.295

2 The Charter of the Church, London 1896, p.91

3 Faith,Freedom and the Future, Lectures X and XI, pp.254-94

4 The Christian Ethic of War, London 1916, p.11

In his Cambridge (Emmanuel Church) Lectures, The Charter of the of the Church, he acknowledged that Rome had also always stood for the autonomy of the Church and that many of the best Anglican minds if they had not for this reason moved to Rome were now commending self-government: ' at the last Church Congress the note of autonomy was singularly prevalent'.[1] But 'religious democracy means a moral freedom utterly foreign to Rome or to any priestly Church'. [2]

'Let us make much, very much of the Church.'[3] Forsyth does so:

> 'The one great preacher in history, I would contend, is the Church. And the first business of the individual preacher is to enable the Church to preach'. [4]

Preaching is not just something the preacher does. It is a sacramental act and a 'voice of the Church to the Church' addressing 'the faith of the local community'.[5] The local community must not idolise the preacher or think that it has done its job when it provides him with a platform:

> 'if the preachers are not satisfactory, let the Church take steps to make them so. If they bore the people, let the people not be too patient'. [6]

Where a preacher tries to handle, as he must on occasion, social and economic questions he should co-operate with 'men of affairs who will add his knowledge to their own'. The 'great

1 The Charter of the Church, pp. 13-14

2 Rome, Reform and Reaction, London 1899, p. 40

3 'The Church as the Corporate Missionary of the Gospel', Sermon, June 1909, reprinted in Revelation Old and New, edited by John Huxtable, London 1962, p. 42

4 Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind(1907), London 1957, p. 53

5 ibid, pp. 62-4

6 ibid, p. 75

collective preacher' is a partnership of preacher and laymen.

'It is through his Church that the minister must work outwards'.[1] The Church is 'the great corporate missionary of the Gospel'. God's salvation is concerned not with isolated individuals but with the world.

> 'Only a society could save society' [2]
>
> 'Only the spiritual kingdom of God can cope with the kingdom of the unspiritual world' [3]

Individuals with their own 'entrenched egoisms have to be 'built into a compelling spiritual unity.. the Church'. [4]

> 'A real Church, made,moved and managed by the Gospel is the first essential for the progress of missions'. [5]

The Church must also be a priestly Church.It is the Church as a whole which is a royal priesthood. It is, he says, one of the defects of Anglicanism that its laity are not included in its priesthood as they are in 'our elective ministry'.[6] The corporate emphasis on priesthood is more evident in his later writings than in The Charter of the Church (1896) where he had said: 'Every Christian is a priest' , though even here he wished to challenge the treatment of 'the priesthood of all believers as a charter of unchastened individualism'.[7] Ten years later he wishes to affirm that 'The Church is a priestly Church', that the Free Churches in particular need to recover this priestly note, and that their objection is only to 'the imperial

1 Sermon, 'The Church as the Corporate Missionary of the Gospel' in Revelation Old and New, p. 39

2 ibid, p.34 3 ibid, p.42

4 ibid, p.42 5 ibid, p.42

6 Rome, Reform and Reaction (1899), p. 182

7 The Charter of the Church, p.56

Similar points are made by T.F.Torrance, Royal Priesthood, p. 35; Hendrik Kraemer., A Theology of the Laity, London 1958, pp. 61f, 93f; Gordon Rupp, The Righteousness of God, London 1953, p. 315

element in the priesthood'. The 'ideal minister' is prophet and priest but he is not king.[1] In one of his last works, Congregationalism and Reunion (1919) the corporate emphasis is quite emphatic:

> 'We do say that the final, the only, priesthood is the priesthood of all believers in that of Christ; that the priesthood of the ministry is not a prerogative grace descending on the Church, but a representative authority rising from it; and that in this respect our ministry has all the priestly value which in a Christian Gospel can be had'.[2]

The corporateness is expressed in the Communion:

> 'The essence of the sacrament in the Church is the common act, the act of the community inhabited by the "common person" of Christ...This puts an end to the worship of the elements, or the monopoly of the priest'.[3]

Forsyth has no objection 'on occasion' to lay celebration. What he does object to and sees as a present danger is the 'laicising' of the ministry through an indifference to theology and an undervaluing of professional skills.[4] He also challenges the Free Church rejection of liturgies. Extemporare prayers, he says, are apt to be private prayers in public:

> 'There is a great democratic note in common prayer which is also true prayer.... Eloquence and ardour have not done so much for Christ's cause as the humble virtues, the united activity and the patient prayers of thousands of faithful people whose names are quite unknown'.[5]

1 'The Ideal Ministry', first published in The British Congregationalist, October 16th 1906, reprinted in Revelation Old and New, London 1962, pp. 93-114, p. 98

2 Congregationalism and Reunion (1919) being two addresses given in 1917 and 1918, London 1952, p. 73

3 The Church and the Sacraments (1917), London 1955, p. 237

4 'Lay Religion', Lecture I in The Person and Place of Jesus Christ (1909), London 1951, pp. 3-31; 'Lay Religion' in The Constructive Quarterly Review, Vol. III, No. 12, pp.766-89; 'The Ideal Ministry' in Revelation Old and New, pp 93-114

5 The Soul of Prayer, London 1916, pp. 54, 56; Congregationalism and Reunion, pp. 75-6

Forsyth expects the laity to be people of prayer, students of the Bible and dogmatically sound.[1] 'Lay Religion' has come to mean 'average religion' with the atonement corrupted to 'attunement' or even 'attainment':[2]

> 'We used to be able to appeal to our laymen and their experience against a Socinian and undogmatic and non-mediatorial Christianity, we can now appeal to them only against a sacerdotal and clerical. We used to be able to take refuge from Arianism (to which the ministers of the Church might be tempted by certain philosophies), in the evangelical experience of its members.... Experience hardly now bears out this hope'.[3]

Finally, for all the emphasis on the Church as corporate, Forsyth, like Dale, is against the Church as Church acting in politics:

> 'The Church has not to solve the social problem but to provide the men, the principles, and the public that can'.[4]
>
> 'It is churchmen that should be politicians and not churches. Let us beware of the political establishment of a disestablished Church '.[5]

Political pressure is best applied by 'leagues formed for that purpose', what today we would call pressure groups. But this does not mean the Church has nothing to do with politics. The Church is the place 'where the social soul is created, the social unity rallied, the social inspiration fed.' Moreover, for Forsyth reform of the Church precedes a concern for the reform of society: 'We are not for society what we should be because the Church is not the society it should be'. The Church should be 'the great home and nursery that really masters egoism'.[6]

1 'How to Help your Minister', reprinted without original date in Revelation Old and New, London 1962, pp. 115-124

2 'Lay Religion', The Constructive Quarterly Review, Vol.III, No. 12, December 1915, p. 780

3 'Lay Religion', The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p.13 Cf. Bernard L Manning, 'Congregationalism in the Eighteenth Century' in Essays in Orthodox Dissent

4 Socialism, the Church and the Poor, London 1908, p. 72

5 Faith, Freedom and the Future (1912), London 1955, p.190

6 ibid, pp. 196-7. Forsyth's fear is that party politics could divide the Church on party lines.

Because Forsyth is writing for the general Christian reader, or because his outlook is ecumenical, or for both these reasons, he does not keep refering to Church Meeting. Nonetheless, his corporate emphasis demands at the very least some forum for discussion and also at times of decision:

> 'A Church Meeting..is the sphere neither of criticism nor of mere discussion, but of Christian work and fellowship in faith and love'.

He has also said that it is not 'a political assembly'.[1] How then is the Church to reach its corporate decisions ? His answer is by distinguishing carefully between two democracies.

The Two Democracies and the Question of Authority

Forsyth for all his criticisms of churches which are merely the 'religious side of the democracy'[2] does accept the description 'democratic churches'[3] as a description of the Free Churches and Congregationalism in particular. He also refers to 'their spiritual democracy'[4] and the 'democratic machinery of the church'[5] together with more neutral expressions like 'local autonomy and initiative' or 'local responsibility'.[6]

'Democracy' returned to the language of Church discussion in the nineteenth century. Congregationalists were hearing lectures on 'God and the People' and feeling Mazzini's religious fervour for democracy.[7] The Chairman of the Congregational Union spoke in 1891 on 'The Sovreignty of the People' and traced the ancestry of democratic

1 'How to Help your Minister' in Revelation Old and New, p.117

2 The Church and the Sacraments (1917), 1955, p 9

3 Positive Preaching, p. 68 'the more democratic and non-Catholic churches'

4 The Principle of Authority (1913), 1952, p. 226 5 ibid,p.238

6 Congregationalism and Reunion (1919), 1952, p. 53

7 The Congregational Monthly, Manchester 1893, p.107 Report

Dissent back to Marsiglio of Padua in 1327.[1] In 1894 the Yorkshire Union, within whose orbit but without whose approval Forsyth had begun his ministry, was addressed on 'A Democratic Church for a Democratic Age'.[2] The most blatant in its claim to relevance and topicality was perhaps Julie Jephson's pamphlet, Christian Democracy - A Church for our Day(1902). The author felt that in a democratic age the people must surely take to Congregationalism.[3] It was not to be. But the Congregationalists Forsyth addressed were now more self consciously democratic than in the time of Dale.

It was not a case of responding to events. This was more an Anglican problem. Parliament was no longer Church of England. Patronage looked like an anachronism. 'The democracy', said Forsyth in his more denominational mood in 1896, 'will increasingly refuse privilege without control'.[4] As Michael Roberts has observed:

> 'By the 1870's some churchmen saw that "in conformity with the spirit of the age" an enlarged electorate would demand the abolition of private interests in church property and the popular election of parsons'.[5]

Congregationalists on the other hand might with some justice claim that events were catching up with them. More important, their polity was now being vindicated by Anglican scholars. Fame at last!

1 Dr John Brown, CYB 1891/2 pp. 55f and with reference to Marsiglio of Padua's, The Defender of the Peace, 1327

2 CW, 1894, p. 248

3 Christian Democracy, London 1902. Congregationalism was 'the most democratic and undoctrinal of all churches'. No wonder Forsyth was alarmed.

4 The Charter of the Church, London 1896, p.25

5 Michael John Derby Roberts, The role of the laity in the Church of England c. 1850-85, unpublished Oxford D.Phil. 1974 (MS D Phil 6019),p. 89
See also George Moberly, Bp. of Salisbury, The Administration of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ, Oxford 1870 p.111 and the question of lay participation in church councils.

Many of the works, by Anglicans and others, in the growing, international bibliography of studies in the Early Church had been known to Dale. The Manual(1884) mentioned Mosheim and Neander from Germany; Coleman from the United States; Davidson, Hatch and Lightfoot from England.[1] All these could be cited by Congregationalists in defence of some, though not all, of their principles. Forsyth could build on this legacy and had three advantages over Dale. First, by the 1900's there had been more time to reflect on such controversial theses as Hatch's that the background to church polity was really the secular guilds and associations of the Roman Empire. Forsyth could say in 1917: 'Hatch's line has not been adopted' and refer for support to Hort, Harnack and Sohm .[2] But on some points he was glad to follow Hatch's line: 'Dr Hatch tells us how the votes of laymen helped to settle the issues in some of the great doctrinal councils'.[3] Forsyth also makes use of the classical model of a mixed constitution which is found in Hatch and applied to the Church as a monarchy of apostles, an oligarchy of rulers, and a democracy which, at Corinth, was the final authority on discipline.[4] Second, Forsyth read widely in German. Nearly half his library is said to have been German.[5] The initial references in The Principle of Authority (1913) are to untranslated works by Ihmels, Pfennigsdorf and Schaeder.[6] Third, the international revival of Calvinism to which Forsyth himself contributed. The

1 Dale, Manual (1884), pp. 21, 56, 68, 92; Article IV.

2 The Church and the Sacraments (1917), London 1955, p. 65

3 The Charter of the Church, London 1896, p. 77

4 Edwin Hatch, The Organisation of the Early Christian Churches (Bampton Lectures,Oxford 1880), p. 21: Norman Josaitis, Edwin Hatch and Early Church Order, Gembloux 1971, p. 32

5 Jessie Forsyth Andrews, 'A Memoir', The Work of Christ. Forsyth studied at Gottingen under Albrecht Ritschl. Manchester, his second pastorate. had a sizeable German population.

6 The Principle of Authority, Preface, p. v

democratic polity of the Church of the Apostolic Age had been underlined by Reformed Church historians, E. de Pressensé, The Early Years of Christianity(ET 1869) and Charles Borgeaud, The Rise of Modern Democracy (ET 1894). Alexander Mackennal had found de Pressensé 's more theological understanding of the Early Church more acceptable than the apparently secular emphasis in Hatch - a point on which Reformed Churchmen could agree with Charles Gore.[1] Forsyth acknowledges Borgeaud in Faith,Freedom and the Future[2] and with one vital caveat agrees that democracy via Calvinism and Independency has been a great blessing both for Church and State. In Forsyth's judgment Calvinism is'the true (my underlining) creator of modern democracy' [3] only because:

> 'Calvinism did not humour human nature and did not believe in it, till God had done with it. [4]
>
> 'It cared more to secure the freedom of God than of man. That is what it found in the Cross. That is why it has been the greatest contribution to public liberty ever made.... Seek first the freedom of God, and all other freedom shall be added to you'. [5]

One other point should be noted before we pursue this discussion of the two democracies. How the Early Church was governed mattered less to Forsyth than it did to Dale:

> 'There is no form of Church institution with divine right as there is none of human society. Christ was not a constitution maker... [6]
>
> 'We cannot restore the exact condition of the New Testament Church.... The normative in the New Testament is not a pattern. It is there in an historic context, not on a desert island' . [7]

1 Alexander Mackennal, The Witness of Congregationalism , CUEW Chairman's Address, London 1887, p. 12; for a recent discussion of Hatch and Gore see Norman F. Josaitis, Edwin Hatch and Early Church Order, Gembloux 1971

2 Faith, Freedom and the Future, p. 106

3 Principle of Authority, p. 8

4 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 15

5 Principle of Authority, p. 255

6 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 48

7 Positive Preaching, p. 98

In Congregationalism and Reunion he boldly confessed that Independency only emerged because of a failure to see these truths; it was the product of a double fallacy. One, that the polity of the New Testament is sole and sacrosanct. Second, that that polity is Independency. Nonetheless he went on to argue that Congregationalists must adapt their polity in the light of this growing - and he would imply - ecumenical understanding of the Early Church.[1]

The Church can be democratic in its method of government only when it distinguishes between two different kinds of democracy:

> 'We have two democracies, a natural and a spiritual. The natural cannot survive without the spiritual. And the spiritual is only saved by that in its constitution which is not democratic, not brotherly but kingly, by an authority that does not proceed from the community, and is not amenable to its vote'.[2]

The two democracies need each other but they are also in conflict:

> 'Sooner or later a great struggle will come between the Church and the natural democracy; and then those Churches, which, being supernatural in principle, have yet in practice become dependent on that democracy, will find themselves stripped of that support, torn assunder, and distressed beyond measure'.[3]

To Forsyth signs of this conflict were everywhere in evidence and it will be best to illustrate this later in connection with specific issues. But in general Forsyth has in mind 'the movements among the women', 'the ferment among the workmen', 'the constitutional question-the Veto of the Lords'[4]

1 Congregationalism and Reunion (1917), London 1952, pp. 62-4

2 The Principle of Authority, p. 226

3 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 12

4 The Principle of Authority, p. 1

Forsyth was writing during such events. The Principle of Authority was published in 1913 and these allusions in the 'Prologue' give it topicality. But his thinking on 'authority' had been gelling for over a decade since that Boston sermon already refered to and the contemporary upheavals were simply the latest evidence that 'we are getting well out into the stream of social revolution'.[1] Later, in 1917, he would see the War as a sign of 'moral anarchy'.[2] That democracy would drift into anarchy, we should remember, was always the big argument of those who opposed it in the first place.

Forsyth does not oppose democracy but the War made it even more clear to him that the Church under God had a vital task in the salvation of society and its democracy:

> 'The Church will come out of the present crisis chastened and exalted if it takes itself seriously enough, and holds itself as morally greater than, soul, family or state, for it is the only society on earth whose one and direct object is the Kingdom of God - if indeed it be not that Kingdom in the making'. [3]

If we translate 'Kingdom of God' as 'Kingly rule of God' as we are now more accustomed to doing then the challenge to democracy becomes more evident. This is in fact made clear by Forsyth in The Principle of Authority: 'The Church of Christ, with a living Christ for King, is no democracy, great as its affinities with democracy are'. [4]

1 The Principle of Authority, p. 1

2 The Justification of God (1917), London 1948, p. 18

3 ibid, p. 15

4 The Principle of Authority, pp. 235-6, 380 ' "The Kingdom of God" will often yield a better sense if we say "the sovreignty of God" '.

It is not easy to identify the'two democracies'. They are not simply Church and State. Both Church and State have an inalienable right to self-government. He wants the Church to be free from State patronage and control but does not want a complete separation, more a 'true marriage' where 'amid intimacy, personal respect is not lost'. He wants the State to respect the Church but this is why it was important for Christians to have a high view of the Church. [1] The two democracies, the 'natural and the spiritual' needed each other; the former needed the latter and the Gospel compelled the Church to share in the redemption of the State.

The'two democracies' are evident in the Church itself and here we may perhaps identify the one as Calvinism, the other as Anabaptism provided we accept the insistence in Faith Freedom and the Future that the Anabaptist element is:

> 'of immense importance, and has been very singularly overlooked or scorned, even in Independency itself' . [2]

Without the 'Anabaptist mother' Calvin could not have fathered democracy.[3] Nonetheless it is the Anabaptist style democracy that Forsyth criticises most. For example, earlier in the same work he had talked in his third lecture of:

> 'a mystic fellowship of the pious democrats and the oppressed... in a loose congeries of groups, ... whose function was mutual comfort and edification, with no church preaching a commanding gospel to the world'. 4

1 Theology in Church and State, London 1915, pp. 174-5, 192f, 208, 241, 247

2 Faith, Freedom and the Future (1912), London 1955, p.296

3 ibid, p.297. Is it also significant that Forsyth adds the word 'spiritual' to father(Calvin) ? - thus indicating the contrast of the spiritual and the natural.

4 ibid, p. 87

There is also a contrast between a Parliamentary Church and a Church ruled by the 'saints':

> 'A Church that is practically ruled by a modern parliament is not ruled by the will of God and cannot be. Parliaments are not elected with reference to the will of God.' [1]

Forsyth was also aware that on the question of Establishment:

> 'the non-religious democracy will say (as the Chronicle cynically said) that it cares nothing for the theology of the case (for which the Church supremely cares), but is glad to have an educated, charitable, and sympathetic gentleman on the side of religion and labour as a State official in each parish' . [2]

In, or outside, Parliament this kind of 'non-religious democracy' should not rule the Church. But even a more religious democracy needed, says Forsyth quoting Mill, 'a centre of resistance' or a 'point d'appui', or what an unnamed 'deep thinker' had called 'a point to which it (religion) can absolutely surrender'.[3] It would find this through the 'stiffening of Calvinism'.[4] 'Democracy is safe only as Christian democracy'.[5] Among social systems democracy'offers most possibility for the Kingdom' but only Forsyth repeats: 'if taken in hand'. The Church must never surrender to 'the natural ideals' of the democracy.[6] What are these 'natural ideals' and where do they come from ?

Forsyth identifies three (or four if we count Liberalism separately) influences creating the 'natural democracy': the Renaissance, the French Revolution, Evolution and Liberalism.

1 Theology in Church and State (1915), pp. 254-5
2 The Charter of the Church (1896), p. 17
3 The Principle of Authority, pp. 231, 237
4 The Christian Ethic of War, London 1916, p. 163
5 Faith, Freedom and the Future, p. 162
6 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 14

The ideal of the the Renaissance was 'natural autonomy', that of the Reformation was 'spiritual obedience - only to the Gospel instead of to the Church'.[1] With an obvious reference to the French Revolution he states:

> 'Authority is a factor as essential to the economy of things and the order of society as either liberty, equality or fraternity'. [2]
>
> 'It is a searching question for any church, "Which stirs your heart most - liberty or holiness?" ' [3]

Liberty was important but it was a secondary and derivative matter. Our freedom he told his fellow Churchman, and in big, bold print is 'FOUNDED FREEDOM'.[4] 'Let us think and and speak less of our liberty and more of our Liberator'.[5] And, as if to anticipate later Church debates about 'Liberation Theology', Forsyth reminds us that Christ is not only Liberator but also Redeemer:

> 'What is entrusted to the Church is not simply redemption, far less mere emancipation; but it is redemption by the Holy, and redemption into His holiness, the redemption of society into that obedience in a kingdom, and into that freedom that waits only upon such obedience'. [6]

Fraternity in the sense of brotherly sympathy was not enough. 'All the brotherhoods are but side chapels to the great Church' [7] Equality may find no space large enough for God: 'The holy God Himself is not popular'.[8] Distinction, the readiness to stand

1 The Principle of Authority, p. 70

2 ibid, p. 305 3 Faith, Freedom and the Future, p291

4 ibid, p. 290

5 The Principle of Authority, p. 255

6 Faith, Freedom and the Future, p. 293

7 The Principle of Authority, p. 307

8 ibid, p. 306

alone was the mark of Christ and therefore of the disciple. Popularity is not enough. Beecher was a popular preacher but his 'influence is fleeting compared with Newman's'.[1] Democracy needs its aristocracy, its elites.

The Renaissance and the Revolution continue as powerful influences on the 'natural democracy' but the contemporary philosophy with which Forsyth contends is the social theory of Evolution. The old question of the 'congruity of evolution' with Genesis is 'neither here nor there'. It is 'a burnt out question'. The big question is now 'its moral and practical tendency'.[2] Evolution produces a false optimism about human nature: 'Man has never fallen, he has only lagged'.[3] It offers no revealed criterion for present practices but assumes that progress is taking place.[4] Forsyth wonders:

> 'Democracy as giving the freest scope to the struggle does not tend to produce really great men'.[5]

It tends to crush out individual initiative and puts an emphasis on quantity and sameness:

> 'to increase the people and not multiply the joy. This is the result of a democracy merely natural and evolved'.[6]

There is a genuine progress to be aimed at, personally and socially. Forsyth is in favour of:

> 'giving the working people what they have not yet- their due share in the products of their labour and the blessings of society',[7]

which we may assume included the franchise but God is not

1 The Principle of Authority, p. 306

2 Missions in State and Church, London 1908, pp. 83f.

3 Christian Aspects of Evolution (1905), London 1950, p. 29

4 Positive Preaching(1907), London 1957, p. 155

5 Christian Aspects of Evolution, p. 31

6 ibid, p. 19

7 Faith, Freedom and the Future, p. 285

a means to an end to be dispensed with when no longer necessary but the End itself and the means by which even democracy is judged:

> 'Democracy,after all,is but another of the ocracies which have come to the top in the history of mankind; and it is not the last. Despotism, monarchy, aristocracy, plutocracy, and so forth - they have all had their hour. And the Church has had to resist every one of them, though it has also, more or less succumbed to every one. Is it democracy alone that the Church is never to resist in the name of its King?' [1]

As for Liberalism in theology 'it might even descend to present God in a light little different from that of a candidate for the suffrage of our faith'[2] because it is so anxious to mould the faith into the categories of the present:

> 'is everything to be sacrificed from Bible, Church or Creed which does not attract or hold the masses of the natural man?'
>
> 'It is easy,of course,to say that above all things we need a simple religion... that this gospel of fatherly love...is the order of faith that befits an age of democracy'. [3]

Forsyth had made his own personal discovery of the inadequacy of liberal theology when he was 'turned from a Christian to a believer, from a lover of love to an object of grace'.[4] Its deficiencies were exposed in the moral nemesis of the Great War:

> 'the nemesis of an anti-theological religion is that it has no resources in a crisis except pale quietism or ruddy patriotism'. [5]

In short, it suffers the 'blight of democracy in that it will own no authority of which it is not the source'. [6]

1 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 12

2 Positive Preaching, p. 121

3 ibid, p. 233

4 ibid, p. 193

5 The Justification of God, p. 12

6 The Principle of Authority, p. 299

The Problems of Democratic Congregationalism

> 'Many a local church has been vexed and ruined by people in whom the natural aggressive freedom of opinion took the place of an experienced and humble freedom in Christ.' [1]

Here speaks the college principal with a pastoral concern for the local churches. And here is the theologian asking if democracy in the sense of majority rule is safe without a Calvin:

> 'the majority principle...was adopted as part of the Church's working machinery by dogmatic believers in days before any questions were raised like those that now emerge, or when those who did raise them went outside. Is it workable without that dogmatic foundation?... The principle of trusting the people applies in the Church only with this extension —trust the people who trust the Gospel and confess it'. [2]

The Free Churches were once the theological Churches. Today as one smart critic had noted they are 'living on their wits'. The aversion to theology springs from the identification of the Church with the democracy and the assessing of the worth of all theology by what proves to be popular.[3] Forsyth will challenge the idea of majority rule but otherwise he will remain loyal to a democratic polity. Many of its risks could be remedied by an instructed laity:

> 'it means more than appears on the surface that the control of the Church should be in the hands of the laity for so many of whom religion fills the relaxed and marginal hours of life. And, while it is proper that it should be so, it is also proper that such a

1 The Principle of Authority, p. 248

2 ibid, p. 238 Cf. The Church and the Sacraments, p. 15

3 ibid, p. 341; The Justification of God, p 85 - 'the reaction against theological system has run high in the Free Churches'. 'The ministry of atoning grace sinks into the ministry of passing help.'

> laity should seek and welcome, with less suspicion than they often do, the due guidance of the experts of the Soul. Otherwise we must not be surprised if, as culture spreads, many should be disposed to seek in a hierarchical Church that safeguard for unpopular or incipient truth which is really secured by the respect for the authority of an educated ministry'. [1]

If one may attempt to expound the last sentence in the light of what Forsyth says elsewhere then it is not sufficient for a Church to be democratic even if democracy is the ideal polity. Polity is in the end 'indifferent for faith',[2] the Gospel must come before polity:

> 'Were there no other alternative, Bishop Gore's gospel would make many put up, for the time at least, with his view of the ministry'. [3]

There is no future for an untheological religion:

> Most thorough Christians will move in the end to join that Church, free or bond, which has most of the power, the future, the authority and the liberty which are in the Christ of the Apostles, and of the Church'. [4]

These are very interesting comments for they assure us that for all his criticisms of democratic Churches the democracy has more sense than to belong to a Church which has nothing to say to it. As he says in The Church and the Sacraments: 'if the democracy hates hard Church, it despises soft Church'.[5] But best of all is to have a Church which expects its laity to be theologians and gives them a real theology and so also a real place in the Church.

1 The Principle of Authority, pp. 343-4

2 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 116. Polity is utilitarian. If Episcopacy were likely to be more effective against paganism the Church should adopt it for the sake of the Gospel. But Forsyth doubts if the old Catholicism is so appropriate in the post (Roman) Imperial era.

3 The Principle of Authority, p. 224

4 The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, 'Lay Religion', pp. 19-20

5 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 15

> 'The Christian theologian is the champion of the Christian laity, the pleader and the justifier of the the general Christian experience:' [1]

It is on the basis of faith answering faith that the Congregational practice in the calling of a minister is justified:

> 'that the Church has the touchstone in its evangelical experience for any preacher who comes with the authority of the Gospel. We do not accept him on the certificate of his college, or the word of his fellow ministers, (far less on the choice of a prime minister), but on our own inward testimony that he finds us, but finds us as the Gospel did - -which found us lost and left us saved'. [2]

This choice of a minister must be rooted in theology. One must ask not 'will he do me good?' but ' would Christ choose him for an apostle?'. [3]

Theology is vital for the laity. There is a crisis in Congregationalism because its foundation beliefs are 'being referred to the popular vote' [4] of a people no longer sure of what they believe. It is the same type of question that was to alarm Nathaniel Micklem, particularly after his visit to Nazi Germany. Could the German people, just by a vote, change laws which were fundamental? [5] In Forsyth's day basic human rights are not being challenged but constitutions are. As regards the State he is prepared for more revolutionary changes. There is nothing final. But the Church has been given an historic and final Gospel.[6] Undermine that and the whole edifice will crumble.

1 The Church, the Gospel and Society (1905), London 1962, p. 82

2 ibid, p. 84

3 ibid, p. 85 (put in inverted commas as questions,not verbatim quotations)

4 Faith, Freedom and the Future, p. 226

5 Nathaniel Micklem, The Law and the Laws, London 1952, esp.pp. 67-8

6 Faith, Freedom and the Future, pp. 226-7

> 'With our churches the mode of voting is settled. Our churches have not representative government. They are not Presbyterian. They have not a legislative eldership but an executive diaconate. They are pure democracies and they act by referendum. In theory everything should come to the church meeting..... We work by plebiscite. And so far it has done well enough on the whole.
>
> What is presented for this mass decision now is the ultimate question of Christian faith and the Church's existence.' [1]

Forsyth had lived through an earlier crisis, that of the Leicester Conference in 1877. At that time he was newly ordained and a Liberal in theology. He sympathaised with men even more Liberal than himself, men like James Allanson Picton whom he was to succeed at St. Thomas Square Hackney, that 'religious communion is not dependent on agreement in theological, critical or historical opinion'. He had argued that a 'democratic Church cannot be doctrinaire' and had commended free and open discussion with the confidence of Milton that where Truth and Falsehood grappled: 'whoever knew Truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter'.[2] Forty years later in his address on Congregationalism and ReUnion (1919) he accepted that the Leicester principle was only sufficient for occasional meetings; much more agreement in belief was needed when it was a question of 'the standing existence and action of a Church in the world'.[3] He never wanted a creed imposed as a test of orthodoxy but he did believe it was necessary

1 Faith, Freedom and the Future, pp. 228-9

2 Forsyth , 'A larger Comprehension: a Remedy for the Decay of Theology'in Public Conference on the Terms of Religious Communion, October 16th 1877, Leicester (Dr William's Library) pp. 18-24. R.W. Dale sided with Dr Enoch Mellor of Halifax against Picton. The Union supported Mellor and Dale by a majority of 1000 to 20. R Tudur Jones, Congregationalism in England, 1962, pp 263-4 Partly because of Forsyth's views at Leicester Mellor opposed his admission to the Yorkshire Union. W.L.Bradley, P.T.Forsyth, p 28

3 Congregationalism and ReUnion (1919), 1952, p. 65

to have some written declaration, a confession of the 'New Testament Gospel'.[1] This could help the denomination explain itself to the world and to other Churches and to protect itself 'from the gusty majorities to which democracies with their idolatry of the hour or the orator are so liable'.[2] Forsyth had in mind a text or a great hymn like the 'Te Deum'.[3]

Forsyth asks: 'How far may a living Church by any majority modify its fundamental constitution?'[4] Could it abandon belief in the Trinity or substitute 'the Spirit of Christ' for the historic Christ? These were and had been live issues. The 'Trinity' question had severely strained Reformed Churches in the eighteenth century. The severing of 'the Spirit' from 'the Word' and the 'historic Christ' was perhaps linked now with the teaching of Schleiermacher, was evident too in Sabatier's contrast of The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit.[5] Forsyth argues against Sabatier in The Principle of Authority.[6] He also refers there to ' an eminent Congregationalist layman' who had asked him if a church by a unanimous decision opted for the 'spirit of Christ' and rejected the'historic Christ' would it still be Congregational. Yes, says Forsyth, but it would no longer be a Church.[7]

The congregation would probably also forfeit its property.

1 Faith, Freedom and the Future, p. 235

2 ibid, p. 231

3 Congregationalism and Reunion (1917), 1952, p. 66 Faith, Freedom and the Future, p. 233 'one genetic article' which would be 'characteristic not coercive'

4 The Principle of Authority, p. 233

5 English translation, London 1904 made a great impact on Micklem in his 'liberal' phase.

6 The Principle of Authority, p. 394

7 ibid, p. 249 · See Forsyth, 'Immanence and Incarnation' Theology' pp. 47-62 in Charles H.Vine, editor, The Old Faith and the New Theology, London 1907. The present conflict in the Church more critical than any since the second century.

There was a case in Yorkshire involving John T Stannard. The Times knew, or thought it knew, all about him and Dale dealt with the case at some length in his second article on 'Congregationalism' (1881).[1] The year before when Stannard at last became ordained in Milton Church, Huddersfield, Forsyth was among 'a host of the advanced' who had gathered in support.[2] He and his followers had just been evicted from the Ramsden Street Chapel, Huddersfield, after a long argument ending in a judgment of the courts that his preaching was not in conformity with the Trust Deeds. John Hunter, also present on that occasion, boasted when he began his ministry in Yorkshire that he did not accept the authority of trust deeds.[3] The case of Stannard and the long drawn out tussle over Tooting Congregational Church that had, by majority decision, attempted to transfer itself and its building into the Presbyterian Church, all showed that the law took a different view.[4] Forsyth was right. Majority rule was not a law for the Church.

> 'No numbers can create a real authority for the conscience, such as we have within the Church'. [5]
>
> 'No possible majority, however long and severely sifted, has the right to undo or dispose of the final gift of God'. [6]

But if questions are to be decided by the counting of heads Forsyth insists we include the dead along with the living. And in 'the great divisions' for how many votes does Christ count?

> 'If the presence of Napoleon on the field was worth 50,000 men, what is the value to the Church of His Presence who is more than worth the whole human race?' [7]

1 Essays and Addresses, London 1899, pp. 220-31; The Times, February 2nd 1881, p. 9

2 Clyde Binfield, So Down to Prayers, London 1977, p. 197

3 Leslie Stannard Hunter, John Hunter DD, A Life, London 1921, p. 32

4 CYB, 1885/6, p. 3 refers to a church meeting of 14 people who decided by majority vote in December 1879; CYB 1888/9, p. 4 - judge ruled later Church Meeting not constitutional. CYB, 1889/90 p. 6; G.F.Nuttall, Congregationalists and Creeds, London 1967, p. 9

5 Principle of Authority, p. 235

6 Faith, Freedom and the Future, p. 230

7 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 7

Rhetoric is not immediately practicable. Forsyth is not writings manuals of Church discipline but uttering warnings against fashionable assumptions. His one practical comment leaves us guessing (and perhaps wondering if he is after all, as Marcus Barth had said, the 'theologian for the practicable man'):

> Majorities may decide a course of convenient action, but they have no divine prerogative, or even promise, in the region of thought, ultimate truth, and reality - on which at last the great concerns rest'. [1]

'Convenient action' might well describe a decision to change the time of church services. But already in Forsyth's day and for the generations that have been instructed by his writings questions like the uniting of denominations have been discussed and debated in Church Meetings, Synods and Assemblies. The dead, in so far as they remain accessible through writings and traditions, have been consulted and 'the mind of Christ sought', but in the end the decision is made by the majority 'present and voting'. [2] And even in the Roman Catholic Church the majority principle is applied. The supreme pontiff, the pope is elected by a two thirds majority plus one. [3] Or are we simply to accept that a majority is not infallible?

1 The Principle of Authority, p.228

2 A good example was the 'Covenant' debate in 1982. In the Church of England and the United Reformed Church appeal was made to the Early Church, scholarly opinion etc., and a two thirds majority of 'the living' in General Synod and Assembly. There was also wide consultation.

3 The fact is well known but the curious mixture of quaint and reverent ritual is explained briefly in Charles Burns, The Election of a Pope, London N.D.c 1980, A pope may also be elected by unanimous and spontaneous acclamation of the Cardinals. Other examples could include the majority decisions in the Council of Trent and the Vatican Councils.

'Aristocracy tempered by Democracy'

To resolve this difficulty Forsyth makes use of the classical model of a mixed constitution that we have seen was used by Calvin and some of the Puritans and Reformed Churchmen of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He does so explicitly only in Congregationalism and ReUnion (1919). There the argument is that the problems of democratic Congregationalism can only be solved ecumenically. Just as a perfect State blends Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy, so we should accept that the different forms of Church polity could be complementary. Episcopacy stands for the Church's welfare and freedom secured by authority. Presbyterianism secures this with order. Congregationalism adds local autonomy and initiative. Other polities could provide 'superintendance and procedure. Congregationalism gives 'warm vitality and an adventurous initiative'. [1]

The beneficiary will be the Kingdom. 'The churches are complementary'. Congregationalism he likens to 'the democratic side of the super-democratic Church'; 'the flying squadron' [2] or 'a light cavalry brigade in the Lord's host'.[3]

> 'Only a united Church has the promise to control that whole democracy which a sectional Church had the commission to create.'
> Independency alone cannot guide the democracy. For one thing, it is in practice too dependent on it.'

1 Congregationalism and ReUnion (1919), 1952, pp. 53-4; Cf. Faith,Freedom and the Future, pp. 309f

2 Faith Freedom and the Future, pp. 308-9

3 'Congregationalism and Liberty', The Constructive Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 3, September 1913, pp 498-521, p499. Congregationalism is unequal to the Church's task in the world but it is not the whole Church.

> 'The Gospel of Christ in a united Church is the only influence that can mould the fierce democracy to the kingdom of God.' [1]

Forsyth also wrote of reconciling 'the Great Church of heaven's royalty with the great power of earth's democracy'. [2]

Aristocracy has a mediating role. But in Forsyth the aristocracy is not only a description of ministers and leaders but sometimes of the Church itself in relation to the wider society, sometimes of minorities within the Church.

The saints, the geniuses, the prophets, the pioneers of great movements are not normally in the majority. Therefore it is a question of 'prime moment for any Church polity' to ask:

> 'What protection does a particular Church system offer for a constitutional minority?' [3]

for is it not true that:

> 'unwelcome truths and unpopular realities in the hands of elect minorities have always been the saving powers' [4]

even of democracy and its majorities? And in the Church a majority decision is more likely to be right if each person sharing in it were prepared to be in a minority of one because he would be just as sure of the Gospel:

> 'The Church at the first was perfectly sure of the Gospel when it was in a minority of 120 against the pagan world and against the Jewish Church. And the Apostles faced and ruled the Church as but a tenth part of that number'. [5]

There is a need in the Church for 'experts of the Soul', with 'range, perspective and footing'. [6] One man's judgment is not

1 Faith, Freedom and the Future, pp. 320-1. Forsyth's advocacy of federation, 'The United States of the Church' is presented as a practical alternative to reabsorbtion into 'an imperial Church'. This would be a retrogade step from the reforms that led to a democratic Church. The Church and the Sacraments, esp. pp. 104-111

2 Congregationalism and ReUnion, p. 54

3 The Principle of Authority, p. 227

4 ibid, pp. 225-6

5 ibid, p. 238

6 ibid, pp. 344, 284

as good as another's. Kingsley was not the equal of Newman. What is the value of 'a village evangelist's(private judgment) against Bishop Gore on Church, Sacraments or the Ministry?' [1] The unlimited right of private judgment Forsyth sees as one of those distorted features of the natural democracy that owes more to the Renaissance than to the Reformation. He argues further that though the Reformation destroyed the old clerical hierarchy, it:

> 'did not destroy the hierarchy of competency, spiritual or intellectual'
>
> 'that element of spiritual or aesthetic distinction is the truth underlying the doctrine of a hierarchy'. [2]

But note the democratic interpretation of such a hierarchy. It is what Karl Barth would call a 'flexible hierarchy'.[3] Forsyth says all are experts when it comes to what God has done for each soul. On other matters all are not equal but 'any one can qualify'.[4] Normally the experts, on the Bible and theology, will be the ministers.

There is a proper sense in which the minister is above the congregation. Only in this way can he really serve the Church democracy: 'He is a minister OF the Word, TO the Church, FOR the people'.[5] An alternative view Forsyth rejects:

> 'There is a tendency, which is called democratic, to regard the minister as simply a delegate from the membership, told off to do certain things (especially talking) which have become a matter of order in the churches'. [6]

1 The Principle of Authority, p. 282

2 ibid, pp. 283, 305

3 Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/2, p. 631

4 The Principle of Authority, p. 283

5 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 11

6 Forsyth, 'Church, Ministry and Sacraments' in The Validity of the Congregational Ministry, edited by J Vernon Bartlet and J D Jones, London 1916, p. 43 being an address to the Council of the Congregational Union.

Is the minister 'the organ of the human fraternity' or 'the minister of the Gospel' ? Is he 'the tribune of the people's cause, the advocate of their rights' or the 'organ of God's grace and God's demand to the people' ? The minister must be free to rebuke the people in God's name. His influence must not be dependent on their favour. One of Forsyth's great sentences is that Athanasius defied the people, he did not deify them. [1]

This was a sensitive issue within the denomination. John Hunter told his congregation: 'I am not responsible to you or to anybody; I am responsible only to God'.[2] His biographer tells us that in fact he became progressively disillusioned with the people in Congregational churches: 'Congregationalism might do if we had large minded, large hearted people to deal with'.[3] Forsyth's remedy was to urge such people to greater respect for the office of minister: 'One hesitates to say that the Churches are proud of the ministry'. [4](He was painfully aware of how little support they gave to the colleges). Edward White in 1886 made the same lament:'because many of our Anglican friends erred by making too much of their sacerdotal intercessors ' many of our people made too little.[5] A man like Hunter could defy the congregation with the sheer weight of learning. An even greater man like Dale could be outvoted and still respect Church Meeting. But there must have been many lesser men who were little more

1 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 11; Positive Preaching, p. 80

2 L.S.Hunter, John Hunter DD, London 1921, pp. 38-9

3 ibid, p. 102, Letter, July 19th 1896

4 'The Ideal Ministry' in Revelation Old and New, p. 97, adding that with an 'elective ministry' this meant a lack of self respect by the Church.

5 As Chairman, 1886/7 of CUEW. CYB, 1886/7, p. 34

than spokesmen for the views of their congregations. Forsyth's discussion was about actual practice. His solution was more sympathetic than Hunter's. He did not say that a minister is responsible only to God. He said that the Church provided the minister with his pulpit and if it came to the point of working against the church it was time to move.[1]

In the spiritual democracy, Forsyth had said, there is that which is 'not brotherly but kingly, an authority which does not proceed from the community and is not amenable to its vote'.[2] Authority is now however something external in the sense of being impersonal, a decree. It is a Person:

> 'True authority, final authority,is personal.... The theological authority is Christ as our active and experienced Saviour.... Christ crucified, the regenerating salvation of Christ experienced, experienced on the scale of the salvation of the Church and a race'
> 'It is the authority of grace'[3]

Authority is 'especially connected with .. the element of distinction, the aristocratic element'.[4] This too is personal. Christ crucified appeals to all but those who have experienced His salvation give the best testimony:

> 'Holy men are the best arguments of the Gospel, short of the Gospel itself, short, i.e. of Christ's real presence with us in the Holy Ghost as our active Saviour.
> Men are an authority to us'.[5]

In this way the mixed constitution of the Church also becomes part of the revelation of the Gospel and the 'authority of grace'.

1 Positive Preaching. pp. 63, 65, 69, 72f.

2 The Principle of Authority, p. 226

3 ibid, pp. 308, 318, 299

4 ibid, p. 305

5 ibid, p. 21

Forsyth in Practice

The Minute Book of Emmanuel Congregational Church, Cambridge permits us some glimpse of Forsyth at work in a local Church Meeting. Major controversies were not a feature of this ministry - though one should remember that for much of this pastorate he was a bereaved and very sick man. Time that might have been spent in debates and reaching agreement was often occupied by talks from 'the pastor' on 'The Ideals of Church Fellowship' or the office of a Deacon. Voting was also avoided wherever possible. Early in his ministry here he explained that it was his duty as minister to suggest changes but that in doing this 'he would bear in mind how much there was to be said for the Quaker method of absolute unanimity'. What was sometimes lost in speed 'meant an additional gain in power'. [1] Elsewhere the Minutes refer to 'taking the sense of the meeting'.[2] In discussion on a revised method of administering the Communion he said he would not think of asking for a vote on such a subject.[3] But later he asked how many were in favour of singing an 'Amen' at the conclusion of each prayer. His question was answered, as it could only be answered, by a vote.[4]

In his published works, Forsyth rarely refers to Church Meetings, and never I think, to that perennial problem of poor attendance. The Minutes record that two-thirds of the members resident in Cambridge were present at the special Church Meeting

1 The Minute Book, 1892-1922 , October 1894, p. 83
Forsyth was minister 1894-1901.

2 ibid, pp. 86, 91

3 ibid, p. 92

4 ibid, October 31st 1900, p. 164

which called him to Cambridge and that the decision was unanimous.[1] But on another occasion the votes totalled twenty-five in a membership of one hundred and ninety.[2]

Forsyth is a local-church man second and a the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic - and he would insist on adding - Free[3] Churchman first of all. (Founded Freedom is a mark of the whole Church, not of a sect). This emphasis, amounting to a revolution for the more insular Independents, means that he sees the local church as but the expression of the One Church. He used as illustration the visitor's request: Where is the University of Cambridge?.[4] So with the Church. It is a totality which'but occurs locally'. This he claims is the New Testament view. Therefore 'merely as local the Church had no Christian rights'.[5] A local Church did not, for example have a right to inflict a minister on the whole denomination (ideally this would be the whole Church since ministry is ecumenical).[6] Forsyth insists that the Church does have this responsibility to choose ministers but this presupposes spiritual discernment of God's gifts and he both asks and comments:

> 'Does the Church's right of choosing a minister remain if it lose this gift?
> Mistakes are often made in calling a minister, through the lack of this spiritual discernment in Churches that do not feed their souls on their Bible, nor will go for guidance to those who do'.[7]

1 Minutes, p. 63

2 Minutes, October 31 1900, p. 164

3 'The Evangelical Basis of Free Churchism', in the Contemporary Review, Number 437, May 1902, pp. 680-95

4 The Church and the Sacraments, pp. 49-50

5 ibid, p. 69

6 The first part was now agreed by the denomination that had suffered too much from free-lancers and the neglect of ordination. Forsyth quotes denominations statements in Congregationalism and Reunion (1917), 1952, pp. 58-9

7 The Church and the Sacraments, p. 149

On the more general point of local freedom versus the needs of the Church and the Kingdom, Forsyth says in Congregationalism and ReUnion:

> 'We now come to see (I am sure a growing number of us do) that such granular autonomy is not equal to the vast problems and tasks which the Church has to face in modern civilisation...
> The thorough-going autonomy of a single congregation becomes more and more impossible..
> The liberty of the great Church does mean the limitation of the small. [1]

He welcomed those developments in his own denomination and among the Baptists that were leading to the creation of area superintendants and moderators.[2] He said in 1917:

> 'I have no objection to Episcopacy as such.
> I could do my work happily under a bishop,
> and feel honoured under the episcopate of many'.[3]

But he would of course expect those bishops to be elected by the Church.[4] He would also resist the imperious imposition of episcopacy or any Church polity as a condition of unity. As between denominations, so,I think it reasonable to infer , between local congregations the exercise of authority that might limit the liberty of the small church, would be exercised democratically. In commending federation as a practical alternative to absorbtion - not as preferable to union as is sometimes thought he meant - Forsyth had said :

> 'The Kingdom of God can only come by the Church of God, and only by a united, free and independent Church. Some effective federation, therefore, is the only democratic form in which the Churches can be independent enough of the democracy truly to bless it while yet local enough to interest it'. 5

1 Congregationalism and ReUnion, 1952, pp 47-9

2 ibid, p. 61. The Congregational scheme of Moderators was adopted in 1919.

3 The Church and the Sacraments, pp. 45-6. Cf. Congregationalism and Reunion, p 61 Forsyth says he is 'not deaf or cold' to the call of Anglicans to help them with a 'reformed Epsicopate'

4 The Charter of the Church, p 16

5 The Church and the Sacraments, p 120

The Church Meeting at Emmanuel shared Forsyth's vision of the local church as the outcrop of the great Church. Forsyth was welcomed as a scholar-pastor. The church 'would always long to have the freshness of his thoughts and the result of the conclusions that his scholarly research might bring'.[1] The minister in turn encouraged members to come to Church Meeting 'prepared to ask help or make suggestions for the common good of the Church'. They did so. At the next meeting they asked questions about last Sunday's sermon and the limitations of Christ's knowledge and wanted more time to consider the spiritual life of the present generation.[2] One participant was A.W.W.Dale, the son of R.W.Dale.[3] Worship, as already indicated, was often on the agenda as well as being part of the meeting.[4] This contrasts with the agenda's during Albert Peel's ministry at Clapton Park and reflects Forsyth's conviction that worship is the Church's first task. How Forsyth acts in Church Meeting is all of a piece with what he says about the mutual responsibilities of minister and people in Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind.[5] It is also possible that some of the discussions in Church Meeting helped to write 'his greatest book', The Person and Place of Jesus Christ (1909) which was prepared during these Cambridge years.[6]

1 Minutes, October 31st 1894, p. 81, welcome by Mr Bond.

2 Minutes, April 3rd 1895, p. 94; May 1st 1895, pp. 95-6

3 Then at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. In 1900 he became Principal of University College, Liverpool. Note the warm comments on Forsyth recorded in his biography, Life of R.W.Dale, pp. 636, 659 , comments made by his father.

4 Minutes, November 4th 1896; February 6th 1895; February 27th 1895; October 31st 1900. Deacons shared in leading the meeting in prayer.

5 Chapter III, 'The Preacher and His Church'.

6 From a duplicated copy of a sermon preached by Dr Clyde Binfield, one-time member at Emmanuel, to mark the sixtieth anniversary of Forsyth's death. November 15th 1981 at Emmanuel Church, Cambridge.
It was Canon J.K.Mozley's opinion that this work was Forsyth's greatest book.

Democracy, Discussion, Disillusion and Forsyth

John Hunter, as was noted, became disillusioned with Congregationalism, liked it less and less, and his son became a bishop in the Established Church. Forsyth, although he had good reason to complain of rough treatment in his early years, remained loyal to his own denomination within the One Church and might even have come to respect those who had once questioned his liberalism. He criticised much in Church democracy but was not anti-democratic. Apart from practical observation, what or who inspired his thought?

Few of the people Forsyth read, except perhaps John Calvin and St Paul, were sympathetic to democracy. If Kierkegaard was 'the theologian with whom Forsyth found greatest affinity',[1] the Danish theologian had been having his own battles with religious democracy about the time Forsyth was born. In 1849 the State Church officially received the title 'The People's Church'. This was all part of the philosophy of Grundtvig and the so called 'Golden Age' theology and was opposed by Kierkegaard as one more symbol of secularised Christendom.[2] Hegel, in whose 'Logic' Forsyth had once 'immersed' himself,[3] would not make anyone a democrat. He regarded 'the sovreignty of the people' as ' a confused notion'. Without the balancing influence of the monarch the

1 Clifford S. Pitt, A Critical Examination of the Thought of Peter Taylor Forsyth, unpublished London PhD thesis, 1976, p. 21

2 Michael Plekon, 'Kierkegaard, the Church and the Theology of ' Golden Age Denmark ', JEH, Vol 34, No. 2, April 1983, pp. 251, 260

3 Positive Preaching, p. 195

'the people' is a 'formless mass' and does not constitute a state. Public opinion may help to guide a government but must not dictate to it. There is no guarantee that a majority will will what Hegel calls the 'universal' and the 'rational'. [1]

In his post-liberal phase, Forsyth's new theological interests were, he says, 'inbibed first from Maurice, and then more mightily through Ritschl', [2] both of whom emphasised the Kingdom. Mackennal considered that Maurice, who was brought up in a Unitarian-Presbyterian household, had more influence among Congregationalists whose company he rejected than in the National Church he esteemed so highly even though his Kingdom of Christ might be 'painful reading' for Congregationalists. [3] Forsyth notes the point made by Mackennal but doubts whether Maurice's influence was as beneficial for Dissent as it may have been for the Church of England. [4] Either way the influence was not democratic. Maurice regarded 'the sovreignty of the people' as 'the silliest and most blasphemous of contradictions'. Of majority rule he said:

> 'so help me God, I do not mean to follow the will of the majority; I hope never to follow it, always to set it at nought' . [5]

Even in his moderately sympathetic tract, issued at the time of the Second Reform Bill, The Workman and the Franchise (1866), he told the workmen: 'I know of no class which has so

1 Hegel, The Philosophy of Right, edited by T.M.Knox, Oxford 1942, pp. 182-3; W.T.Stace, The Philosophy of Hegel, London 1924, p. 625

2 Positive Preaching, p. 195

3 Alexander Mackennal, The Evolution of Congregationalism, London 1901, pp. 195-9

4 Forsyth, Faith, Freedom and the Future, p 172

5 Cited in A.R.Vidler, The Theology of F.D.Maurice, London 1948, p. 195 . See also A.R. Vidler, editor for Maurice, The Kingdom of Christ (2nd edition 1842) London 1958, Vol. I, p. 201, criticism of majority rule, Vol.II, pp. 124f, criticisms of Presbyterians.

much interest in NOT exalting the majority into His throne'[1]

Forsyth's criticisms of 'individualist democracy' are shared, as Forsyth acknowledges, by Leonard J Hobhouse in Liberalism (1911).[2]

In acknowledging Hegel, Forsyth added in a footnote: 'I desire to own here how very much I owe to Dr. Fairbairn'.[3] Andrew Martin Fairbairn was the first Principal of Mansfield, the college which Dale had helped to found in Oxford. If Forsyth owed his conversion from liberalism to Dale, as Garvie thinks,[4] he owed many of his thoughts about the Church and Church democracy to Fairbairn. Indeed, it may be Fairbairn, and, as was said earlier, Calvin and Paul, who help him to think more positively. To Fairbairn, a close though not uncritical supporter and friend of Hatch, the first churches were real democracies. 'The people are even more within their rights in claiming an active place in the conduct and legislation' of the Church than they are in the State. But such people must be 'the people of God'.[5] We are now (1894) in 'the supreme moment of our history'. The people rule but:

> 'unless God live in and rule through the people, the end of all our struggles, the goal of all our boasted progress, will be chaos and chaos is death'.[6]

Fairbairn is more interested in religion, Forsyth in the Church. If one reads Fairbairn and then Forsyth one can see the fruit of later reflection on the history and theologies that Fairbairn

1 F.D.Maurice, The Workman and the Franchise, London 1866, p227

2 Faith,Freedom and the Future, p. 192

3 Positive Preaching, p. 195

4 A.E.Garvie, Memories and Meanings of my Life, London 1938, p. 187. For Forsyths appreciation of Dale see the London Quarterly Review, CLXXXII., April 1899, pp. 194-21

5 Fairbairn, Religion in History and in Modern Life, London 1894, p. 31

6 ibid, p. 61

had helped Forsyth explore.

Disillusionment with democracy directed attention to the question of authority. There was a crisis of authority. Many of those who felt it most keenly belonged to the Reformed tradition. As Reformed Churchmen they could not resort to an infallible Pope. They were not so certain now about the Bible. It was no longer, as it had been even in Dale's time, the basis of their polity. Not being an hierarchical Church, they could not plead for canonical obedience. But neither could they simply say 'the voice of the people is the voice of God'. Forsyth could not say this: '"Vox populi vox Dei", if it ever be true, is certainly not true in the Church for its Gospel'. [1] And there we see the direction in which a Reformed answer to the question might be found.

John Oman (Presbyterian), the scholar who was to be Nathaniel Micklem's most revered mentor, sensed the crisis back in 1902:

> 'there has been an exceptional shaking of the foundations, so that no one seems quite sure what things that cannot be shaken remain'. [2]

The full title of his book was originally Vision and Authority, or the Throne of Peter (1902). The Roman Church had created a pope 'with a clear notion of an authority which men shall obey and not discuss'. [3] The ultimate authority was a vision of the truth in Jesus such as had come to fishermen on the Lake of Galilee. [4]

1 Forsyth, The Principle of Authority (1913), London 1952, p. 251

2 John Oman, Vision and Authority (1902), 2nd edition without the subtitle 'or the Throne of Peter', London 1928, p. 19 For a recent Reformed contribution to this discussion see W.A.Whitehouse, The Authority of Grace, Essays in Response to Karl Barth, Edinburgh 1981. He says, p. 227, 'it is Forsyth who provides for me the parameters of any adequate discussion of authority'.

3 Oman, Vision and Authority, p. 92

4 ibid, p. 33

More was sometimes revealed to babes than to the wise and the prudent.[1] Nor could there be any warrant for a coercive authority:

> 'only by ecclesiastical juggling is He changed into the potentate who will tolerate no difference of doctrine and no variety of service'.[2]

These democratic implications are more clearly discerned in Oman's The Church and the Divine Order (1911). The Church is organised wholly on the basis of love.[3] Jesus, contrary to the views of Loisy, rejected the patterns of secular society. 'One is your Teacher and all ye are brethren' (Mt. 23,8-12). Jesus did not institute an hierarchy.[4] Oman disagrees with Sohm who argued that the Church could never have been democratic for how then did it become aristocratic.[5] There is a sense, says Oman, in which it is 'ultra democratic' but only in the sense that each member is valued for the insights he might have received as to the mind of God.[6]

Two other British theologians in this period try to balance freedom and authority. J.H.Leckie (Church of Scotland) Authority in Religion (1909) thinks that the questioning of authority is itself a product of political democracy which accustoms men to 'find in themselves the sanction of government'.[7] More persistent and more profound was A.E.J. Rawlinson. Then a canon of the Church of England and later Bishop of Derby, he had been brought up as a Congregationalist, and his writings show some debt to James Vernon Bartlet of Mansfield College.[8] The Congregationalism he

1 John Oman, Vision and Authority, p. 73

2 ibid, p. 110

3 John Oman, The Church and the Divine Order, London 1911, p. 307

4 ibid, pp. 43-50

5 ibid, p. 91

6 ibid, pp. 318, 92

7 J.H. Leckie, Authority in Religion, Edinburgh 1909, p. 48

8 A.E.J. Rawlinson, 'The Principle of Authority' in Foundations, London 1913, Chapter VIII, p. 387 refers to a debt to 'my friend Dr Vernon Bartlet' for this section.

rejects is the Congregationalism of Dale and of Peel, the autonomous, independent congregations gathered 'wherever two or three' meet in His Name.[1] The authority he craves must have a sense of the whole Church Catholic behind it. He thinks that in some ways Congregationalism comes nearest to this vision, if only it had a greater sense of the whole Church.[2] He had not read Forsyth on The Principle of Authority because it only appeared that year (1913), and The Church and the Sacraments, with its Catholic vision of the whole Church manffested in each local church was still to come(1917).[3]

Both Rawlinson and Forsyth are agreed in rejecting the views of another Reformed writer, Auguste Sabatier, The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit. Sabatier was of French Huguenot background and taught in the University of Paris. This work was written in 1899 and translated into English in 1904 and, according to Micklem, was very influential. He rejects the notion of an hierarchy.[4] We either go back to the old religion of Catholic authority and obedience to the letter or 'joyfully and vigorously'[5] embrace the religion of the spirit in a 'religious democracy', a 'republic of fraternal souls'.[6]

In reply, Forsyth has this to say:

> 'Protestant theology is founded upon authority as much as Catholic .... the authority is the moral, holy, historic Gospel of the grace of God in and through Him and His Cross '.[7]

1 Rawlinson, Foundations(1913), p. 394

2 ibid, p. 394. Rawlinson also pursued the theme of authority in Catholicism with Freedom, London 1922, and Authority and Freedom, London 1924

3 Forsyth, The Church and the Sacraments

4 Sabatier, The Religions of Authority, ET London 1904, pp. 81, 89

5 ibid, p. 253

6 ibid, p. 313

7 Forsyth, The Principle of Authority (1913) London 1952, p. 395 Sabatier is mentioned on the previous page.

Protestant theology should also, in Forsyth's view, be as much concerned with 'Authority in the Church'. But to anyone coming to Forsyth from the usual 'Catholic' discussions of the subject this may not appear so obvious.

Dr George Caird returned from the Second Vatican Council full of enthusiasm for the document De Ecclesia. He told his fellow Congregationalists of exciting parallels between Rome's rediscovery of the responsibility of the whole People of God and Congregational Church Meetings, and the new emphasis on the Bible and Forsyth's insistence on radical obedience to the claims of the Gospel. But he wondered if 'even Forsyth overlooked' the corporate basis of authority.[1] Quite the contrary. In so much ecclesiastical discussion the real corporate basis, the laity, the whole people of God, clerical and lay, are overshadowed by preoccupation with the Ministry.[2] In Kraemer's phrase 'the laity does not really rise above the horizon'.[3] But in Forsyth all the laity are in the foreground for his twin concerns are the Gospel and the Democracy. Everything else, including Ministry and Bible, is subservient. There are no dominating intermediaries. There is one compelling authority, the Redeemer, and there is one response which is common to all the faithful; not obedience, but humility. From humility springs a reverence for the Church as 'the experient trustee of the saving word'.[4] Forsyth loves the Church.

1 George B Caird, Our Dialogue with Rome, Oxford 1967, pp. 26, 56

2 See for example, The Final Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission, London 1982, p. 72

3 Hendrik Kraemer, A Theology of the Laity, London 1958, p. 82

4 The Principle of Authority, pp. 417-19, 326
Cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (1944), New York 1972, pp. 150-1
'Democracy requires... religious humility'. inspired by the majesty of God.

> 'Let us never in the name of a personal Christianity so reject the authority of the Church as to do despite to the great communion and conviction of saints... The riper we are the more reverent we must be to the Church - but only as the ambassador of the imperial Gospel.....If the final authority is God in Gospel, the Church shares in that authority as the expert of the Gospel and the soul. [1]

The 'great communion and conviction of saints'is authoritative for Forsyth. He has not overlooked the corporate basis of authority, for as he goes on to explain, much of what he himself has learned about God's glory and holiness, and faith as obedience, was brought home to him by Calvin and the Jesuits, and the testimony of'Dr Dale's last illness' that Christ is not only Saviour but King. [2] Men transformed by God are 'an authority to us'.[3] This takes us back to the corporate emphasis on the Church's preaching, worship and mission which is where this chapter began.

1 The Principle of Authority, p. 326

2 ibid, pp. 377, 373

3 ibid, p. 21

Chapter V
ALBERT PEEL 1887-1949[1]

Peel saw himself as the champion of the Congregationalism of Dale and Forsyth, and the spokesman of an adventurous faith on the spirit of a favourite hymn based on John Robinson's parting words to the Pilgrim Fathers: 'The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his Word'. In the Preface to his most strident book, Inevitable Congregationalism,[2] he said 'R.W.Dale's belief in Congregationalism and P.T.Forsyth's emphasis on some aspects of it recur like a refrain'. In the 1930s and 1940s he used all his literary skills to challenge the 'orthodox Dissent' of men like Micklem. Thus his close involvement with Dale, Forsyth and Micklem gives Peel a central place in this study, a most important voice in the argument, even if, on other grounds, his place in this august company seems less assured.

He was never a college principal like Forsyth or Micklem, although he early distinguished himself as a scholar and did some teaching at Bradford[3]. His scholarship earned him the Oxford B.Litt, two doctorates and a Fellowship of the Royal Historical Society. But like Dale he was a pastor. It was with great reluctance that he resigned from the charge of a local church to concentrate full time on his editorial and historical work. As he commented at the time: 'without pastoral work of some kind, I, for one, could never be content[4]. He had been minister in a small town in

1 There is no biography of Peel. There are obituary notices by
Charles E.Surman, CYB 1950, pp.523-4
Alex J.Grieve, CQ Vol.XXVIII, 1950, pp.9-10
Sidney M.Berry and others, CW November 10th, 1949

2 Inevitable Congregationalism, Essays and Addresses 1917-34, London 1937

3 Kenneth W.Wadsworth, Yorkshire United Independent College, London 1954, p.155

4 Thirty-Five to Fifty, London 1938, p.48

Lancashire, Great Harwood 1913-22 and then in a London suburb, Clapton Park 1922-34. One always senses that he enjoyed the former more for a key to his whole understanding of the local congregation is that it must be a real pastoral unit - 'a family where the members know and help and serve each other'[1].

Some who knew him would think of him more as the intellectual than as the pastor. But pastoral and journalistic commitments frustrated a lifelong ambition to publish definitive volumes on the history of Elizabethan Puritanism. The Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts published after his death may serve as his literary memorial. Peel himself had done much of the editing for The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne[2], and this and the volumes on Barrow and Greenwood were completed 1953-70 by Leyland H.Carlson. As early as 1920 Peel had noted 'I have for many years had in preparation a work on Elizabethan Puritanism and Separatism'[3]. As a journalist he is inclined to make great sweeping generalisations even about church history, but at his best as an historian he shows meticulous concern for detail, as for example in his painstaking deciphering of the Notebook of John Penry 1593[4] or the very detailed footnotes in his The First Congregational Churches, New Light on Separatist Congregations in London 1567-81[5]. He does have an assured place in a select company of Congregationalists who are widely recognised as professional historians, experts on their own

1 Thirty-Five to Fifty, London 1938, p.45

2 The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne edited by Albert Peel and Leyland H.Carlson, London 1953

3 The First Congregational Churches, Camb. 1920, Preface

4 The Notebook of John Penry 1593, Camden Society 3rd series Vol.LXVII, London 1944

5 The First Congregational Churches, Camb. 1920

denominational history. In this group Peel would include Dale for whose historical work he has great respect[1], Williston Walker[2], F.J.Powicke and Geoffrey F.Nuttall. Nuttall in many respects may also be regarded as Peel's successor. He extends Peel's historical researches into the next century and continued the high standards set by Peel in editing The Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society. Peel was editor from 1924 until his death in 1949.

Peel is in the tradition of Dale as a minister-editor. As Dale edited The Congregationalist so Peel founded and edited the Congregational Quarterly from 1923-45 with the important difference that the Congregational Union had at last recovered from its skirmishes with John Campbell and was prepared to give the Quarterly its official support[3]. In addition, Peel contributed to the Manchester Guardian and to The Christian World. His skill as a journalist and populariser is also evident in such works as A Brief History of English Congregationalism[4], written at the request of the Young People's Department of the Congregational Union for those contemplating membership and his pen portraits of famous Congregationalists in the Congregational Two Hundred[5].

1 See for example his A Brief History of English Congregationalism, London 1931, p.7, 'you could not do better than get R.W.Dale's History of Congregationalism'

2 The Congregational Two Hundred 1530-1948, London 1948, pp.265-6

3 For Peel's own comment on this fact see A Brief History of English Congregationalism, London 1931, p.85. Other minister editors included James Guiness Rogers and Henry Allon. Peel edited a collection of letters to Allon in Letters to a Victorian Editor, London 1929

4 Above cit.

5 Congregational Two Hundred 1530-1948, London 1948. This incorporated his earlier volume, A Hundred Eminent Congregationalists, London 1927

His expertise as an historian of the denomination and his decided views on Churchmanship gave him a place on many important committees. He was chairman of the British Commission on Congregationalism that reported to the Fourth International Congregational Council in 1920[1]. He was one of a select group of five, chosen to represent the different shades of International Congregationalism that reported to the Sixth Council in 1949 and on that occasion had been able to agree with Micklem who wrote the first draft of their report[2]. He was also a member of the Joint Conference of representatives of the Congregational Union and the Presbyterian Church in England that commended organic union between the two churches but Peel himself had little sympathy for such a move and opposed the report when presented to the Congregational Union Assembly[3]. In this it was evident that he spoke for the majority of his fellow Congregationalists[4]. Had he lived to 1972 he would by then have been outvoted, but his sympathies would, I am sure, have been with the Congregational Federation. If the United Reformed Church can be described as a Micklem Church, the Federation still echoes the voice of Albert Peel. He was Chairman of the Congregational Union for the year May 1940-41. His nomination was also a recognition of his international significance. He was chosen, he suggests, because it was felt that his American contacts would be particularly useful in a year of an International Congregational

1 Proceedings of the Fourth International Congregational Council. For a useful, as well as personal impression of International Congregationalism, see the work by Albert Peel and Douglas Horton, London 1949

2 Proceedings of the Sixth International Congregational Council, Boston/London 1949, pp.35-39 and included in papers discussed at Lund 1952 in R.Newton Flew (editor) The Nature of the Church, London 1952, pp.183-5

3 Joint Conference Report, London 1947. BW May 22nd, 1947 mentioned in Tudur Jones, Congregationalism p.433; CYB 1948, pp.87-8; CYB 1949, p.92

4 Discussions between the two churches were dropped because of lack of support although a Covenant Relationship was affirmed in 1951. See Tudur Jones, op. cit. p.433

Council[1]. This Council, in fact, had to be postponed because of the War and did not meet until 1949. Earlier, in 1938 Peel had delivered lectures on Christian Freedom, The Contribution of Congregationalism to the Church and to the World[2] to the General Council of Congregational and Christian Churches in the States. These lectures sought to encourage those Americans who were rethinking Congregationalism. Back home, as Chairman, his final word was one of doom unless Congregationalists would get out of a rut. '...unless the churches can get out of their ruts, and break the tyranny their huge buildings and their one-type ministry have imposed on them, they are doomed'[3].

Those who disagree with Peel find it easy, too easy, to dismiss him. Grant says that in his statements of what constitutes the Congregational witness, there is 'much liberalism, little of historic Nonconformity'. In Peel's Christian Freedom he detects the Zeitgeist of the 1920s[4]. Micklem himself in virtually demolishing Inevitable Congregationalism with his Congregationalism Today 1937 exploited the fact that the key essay in Peel's volume was in fact first published in 1917: 'Thus we spoke of Congregationalism, thus we rejoiced in it, thirty years ago'[5].

Horton Davies, also with Grant one of Micklem's students,

1 Journal 1940, London 1941, p.17

2 Christian Freedom, London 1938. The subject of the Sixth Council postponed from 1940 was 'Freedom and Fellowship through Christ'

3 Journal 1940, p.97

4 John W.Grant, Free Churchmanship in England 1870-1940, London (n.d.), pp.355-6

5 Nathaniel Micklem, Congregationalism Today, London 1937, p.5; Albert Peel, Inevitable Congregationalism, Essays and Addresses 1917-34, London 1937. The original pamphlet published in 1917 was The Congregational Principle, Positive and Inevitable. This in turn acknowledges a debt to F.J.Powicke, The Inevitableness of the Congregational Principle.
The idea of Congregationalism as inevitable, natural and primitive is also found in Alexander Mackennal, The Evolution of Congregationalism, London 1901, p.47

locates Peel in what he calls 'The School of Spontaneity', a school which is 'hard to define because so inchoate' but characterised by a trend to the 'anti-historical and anti-authoritarian'. Davies notes that this was nonetheless the dominant or largest school in Congregationalism - the others he calls those of Reformed Churchmanship and the 'Society of Free Catholics' - from about 1900 to 1935. In this category Davies places W.B.Selbie, J.Vernon Bartlet, C.J.Cadoux and Peel, all of them Mansfield men, the first and the second and third Principal and Lecturers respectively. He could well understand why Selbie was attracted to the 'School of Spontaneity' but adds - 'It is more than curious that it should have appealed to the other three for they were all distinguished historians'[1].

We gain more respect for Peel and his lasting significance if we note that while the 'School of Spontaneity' may have been a passing phase as a dominant influence in Congregationalism, there is a connection between Peel's views and the 'spontaneous expansion of the Christian Church' ideas of Roland Allen. These, too, reflected what some had thought thirty and more years ago but were to be the subject of a strong revival of interest in the 1960s. Then in turn would come Charismatic or Pentecostal Renewal in the mainline churches and the growth of the House Church Movement. Peel had said very loudly and very frequently that there was no future for a Christianity that could not adapt to the needs of the twentieth century, where all the energies were absorbed in maintaining ministers and buildings.

Nor should he be dismissed as 'anti-historical'. It is true that as an historian, particularly in his more general lectures or popular writings, he is inclined to put on one side the facts that he has elsewhere so meticulously researched and romanticise about

1 Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, Volume V, The Ecumenical Century, Oxford 1965, p.349

the simplicity of 'the little groups of people' who trusted in the 'life giving Spirit of God' rather than in 'machinery and organisation'[1]. He is not so careful as Nuttall, despite the strong bonds of sympathy in the Churchmanship of each, to keep distinct 'historical presentation' and what Nuttall calls 'succeeding judgement'[2]. But there are two positive features of Peel's interest in Church history that should be noted.

The first is that his special interest is in a fluid, experimental period of Church History. In the Elizabethan period, 'all Protestants, even the bishops' assumed that there would be further reformation of the Church on Genevan lines[3]. He is with Dale, and against Burrage and Dexter, much more ready to call the meeting in the Plumber's Hall in 1567, or that of Richard Fitz' congregation which had come to public notice in 1571, and other contemporary gatherings, the 'first Congregational Churches'[4]. He is critical of those who 'speak of "classic Congregationalism" as if there were a fixed body of beliefs and practices under that name', but if there is such a thing then its key feature is the 'insistence on the guidance of the Spirit'[5]. This is to make the very mistake he has just criticised but that the guidance of the Holy Spirit was something rediscovered, more particularly in the seventeenth than in the sixteenth century, is an historic fact[6].

1 A Brief History, pp.9, 11

2 G.F.Nuttall, The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience, Oxford 1947, p.168

3 The First Congregational Churches, Camb.1920, p.3

4 ibid, pp.7, 33-39, 47, with references to Dale, Dexter and Burrage

5 Christian Freedom, London 1938, pp.42, 48

6 See Nuttall, The Holy Spirit

The second positive emphasis on history is his insistence that Congregationalism owes more to the Anabaptists than has generally been acknowledged. Forsyth in Faith, Freedom and the Future[1] has argued that Independency had two strands, one from Geneva and Calvin, the other from the Anabaptists. We are 'children of the Anabaptists' as well as 'sons of Geneva', said Peel in 1938[2]. He was making a polemical rather than an historical statement. He was alarmed at Neo Calvinists surrendering to the totalitarian spirit of the age. Elsewhere he appreciates that the history of Anabaptism and its connections with Independency is somewhat elusive:

> 'There is scope for research in regard to the influence of Anabaptism on the origins of Congregationalism in England. Perhaps some young Congregationalist will attempt it'[3]

Further research[4] has not to date cast much more light on the question and, as was suggested in the first chapter, there is more to be gained from exploring the range of what Peel calls 'the Calvinistic environment'. Nonetheless, it is clear that Peel would like to know more about the Anabaptists. He thinks that:

> 'They were reformers who wished to carry the Reformation to its logical issue, who realised what religious freedom might be if the principle that no priest and no prince had a right to come between a man and God were put into practice .... They maintained that each congregation of believers should be independent of all external control, civil or ecclesiastical'[5]

This is Peel in 1931. Later in 1943 in The Christian Basis of Democracy he criticises Dr.Rufus Jones for giving too much credit to the Anabaptists rather than the Independents:

1 P.T.Forsyth, Faith, Freedom and the Future, (1912), London 1955. Forsyth was mainly critical of the Anabaptist legacy and perhaps for that reason is not quoted here by Peel. To Forsyth Anabaptism - which he admits is an ambiguous term does not 'represent the essence, idea, and genius of Independency'

2 CQ 1938, p.7 3 A Brief History, p.20

4 For brief discussion of this see Michael R.Watts, The Dissenters Vol.1, Oxford 1978, p.8; B.R.White, The English Separatist Tradition, Oxford 1971, p.xii. White hints at the significance of Morely 'an admirer of Calvin and an enemy of Anabaptism'. White, p.xiii.

5 A Brief History, pp.19-20

> 'The fact is it is impossible to distinguish between the two streams, Anabaptist and Independent; they run together and they were joined by a Quaker tributary later'[1]

Jones, in fact, will also be seen to be rather vague about the precise ideals of the Anabaptists. Like Peel he admires them as the thorough going Reformers but gives no details[2].

It should also be noted that Peel finds in John Wyclif and the Lollards 'something of the essence of Congregationalism'.[3] A.G.Dickens thinks it rash to describe the 'Lollard wing' as the 'ancestor of Independency' but admits that the 'two appealed to the same sorts of people for similar reasons'[4]. The features of Lollardy included anti-clericalism and a challenge to 'catholic' understanding of the eucharist, both tendencies that are very evident in Peel.

Whether Peel's 'Christian Freedom' is a development or a departure from the Congregationalism of the Elizabethan Separatists, let alone that of the New Testament, is a matter for dispute. What makes Peel important for this study is that he does represent many twentieth century Congregationalists who have strong sympathies for the Society of Friends, are suspicious of any emphasis on creeds, ministry, sacraments or liturgies. And, as one might therefore expect, of all four spokesmen in our study, Peel is the most

1 The Christian Basis of Democracy, London 1943, p.36

2 Rufus M.Jones, Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth, Camb., Mass., 1932, p.30. On p.ix Jones notes the connection between religious movements like the Seekers and democracy. In A Brief History, p.14 Peel acknowledges his debt to Rufus Jones, Studies in Mystical Religion

3 A Brief History, p.15. See also his footnote in The Christian Basis of Democracy, London 1943, p.31. Peel notes Wyclif's emphasis on the individual 'which we have called Christianity's main affirmation in regard to man'

4 A.G.Dickens, Lollards and Protestants in the Diocese of York 1509-1558, Oxford 1959, p.247. 'The communities which displayed the most marked Lollard-Protestant tendencies before 1558 proceeded in each case to develop puritan tendencies in Elizabethan and Jacobean times. The fact cannot be purely coincidental.' Dickens is also useful on the question of Anabaptist influence - e.g. p.244

unreserved believer in Christian democracy. As his colleague, F.J.Powicke said, in Congregationalism 'the people are the Church, under Christ; self gathered, self organised, self governed'.[1]

Peel's Democracy

Peel seems to have taken political democracy very much for granted until the mid-1930s when he began to detect the pervasive influence of totalitarianism. In 1934 he warned:

> 'There are believers in the totalitarian state even in this island who would tune the pulpit and censor the press and stifle opinion. Are those who believe in freedom vigilant?'[2]

In 1935 he feels that in these days 'democracy is at a discount'. People accept that dictators may be inevitable. They have more confidence in the interpretation of the will of God by a 'Pope or Cardinal, Bishop or Moderator' than in the 'inspiration of consecrated men and women gathered together in fellowship'.[3]

In 1937 he is alarmed at the demand for authority:

> 'Is it fanciful to see in the demand for dogma another expression of the hunger for authority which marks our time? Are those who would tell us what is the faith - as if the faith were a static thing and not something living and developing - not unconsciously moved by the same spirit as the dictators?'[4]

1 F.J.Powicke, The Essentials of Congregationalism, Edinburgh 1899, p.19. Powicke attributes this view to Henry Barrow on whom he is an acknowledged authority. See his Henry Barrow and the Exiled Church of Amsterdam, London 1900. In Powicke's view sacraments and ministry belong to the perfecting of the church but are not indispensible, Essentials of Congregationalism, p.19

2 CQ 1934, p.149

3 CQ 1935, p.148

4 CQ 1937, p.2

The target here is Micklem who had just published a book What is the Faith? in 1937.[1] The following year he accuses John Whale of succumbing to the same 'Zeitgeist' and in effect advocating a 'totalitarian Church': 'Apparently it has been determined by some Congregationalists what things are necessary and vital for membership of the Church at all times and places'.[2] In What is a living Church? Whale had asserted equally forcefully that the Church is not 'a society of man's contriving, but a sacred gift of God' and that the Communion is 'the focal centre of the life of the Church'.[3]

The final attack in 1939 reads almost like a declaration of war. People are alarmed at too much freedom of opinion:

> 'We must have conscripts in the Church with every man under authority - and not merely those aged 20. We must have Dictators who shall tell us what we must believe and what we may say and do if we remain within the Church. And our Dictators offer themselves. Obviously it is College Principals in the ancient Universities who are best fitted to declare what is the faith, and to tell those who do not accept their dogmas that they are guilty not of heresy but of unbelief.'[4]

As is clear from these excerpts and is expressed in Peel's second lecture on Christian Freedom delivered in 1938 the clash is between on the one side 'The Totalitarian State and the Totalitarian Church', and on the other, 'Our Historic Witness for Freedom'.[5]

Peel is more interested in freedom than in democracy, probably because he thinks of democracy as a method of expressing something

1 Nathaniel Micklem, What is the Faith?, London 1937. This is reviewed in the same volume of CQ, pp.113-4 by D.W.Langridge who accuses Micklem of 'retreating backwards through the centuries'. Cf Peel in Christian Freedom, London 1938, p.41 'Sometimes even within the circles of the Free Churches voices are raised calling us back to Nicaea, to Aquinas, to Calvin' which is also aimed at Micklem.

2 CQ 1938, p.259

3 John S.Whale, What is a Living Church?, Edinburgh 1937, pp.28,50. Peel is particularly alarmed at the emphasis on Communion

4 CQ 1939, p.319, part of a lecture by Albert Peel to the Union of Modern Free Churchmen. John Whale was Principal of Cheshunt College, Cambridge and Nathaniel Micklem of Mansfield College, Oxford

5 Christian Freedom, London 1938, Lecture II, p.33f

more fundamental, namely freedom. In fact, in 1917, when some were then fighting to make the world safe for democracy Peel said that the 'democratic form' of the church government of Congregationalists was only 'the superficial aspect of the witness of their forefathers'.[1] And the freedom he contends for is primarily individual freedom. So he concludes his The Christian Basis of Democracy declaring that it is the duty of the Churches to 'show how in a highly organised community the individual may have freedom to develop his personality'. The same page bears the title: 'Freedom and Fellowship not incompatible'.[2]

When he does turn to democracy itself Peel is not an original thinker and he freely admits this. It is significant it was someone else's idea that he should lecture to the University College of North Wales on 'The Christian Basis of Democracy'.[3] He is aware of an enormous bibliography on the subject and thinks that much of what he wants to say has been better said by Dr.Ernest Barker[4] and Dr.A.D.Lindsay[5], which is true. In a key section he relies heavily on A.S.P.Woodhouse's Introduction and edition of the Army Debates in Puritanism and Liberty[6]. This book has only just been published, in 1938, and so shows what a conscientious reader Peel was, but had he been especially interested in the subject he could have studied these very important discussions in Cromwell's Army about the franchise in the Clarke Papers edited by C.H.Firth[7].

1 Inevitable Congregationalism, London 1937, pp.13-14, from the 1917 pamphlet (p.3)

2 The Christian Basis of Democracy, London 1943, p.71

3 ibid, p.7

4 ibid, p.8, Peel refers particularly to Ernest Barker's Reflections on Government, Oxford 1942; on p.60 he quotes Barker on the influence of Nonconformity (Barker was brought up as a Congregationalist)

5 The references, pp.8, 50 are to A.D.Lindsay's The Modern Democratic State. Lindsay was a Presbyterian

6 A.S.P.Woodhouse, Puritanism and Liberty, London 1938; 2nd edition, London 1974

7 C.H.Firth (editor), The Clarke Papers, London 1891-1901

One problem that does particularly interest Peel is that of size. The question was raised only indirectly by Woodhouse in discussing whether the democracy of the elect congregation could be extended to the wider society of the 'unregenerate masses'[1]. The Army Debates also show how a decentralised democracy could work well: the rank and file had elected their own 'Agitators'[2]. Woodhouse's discussion raises a whole range of issues - the natural man and the elect of God; the question of equality: are all equally qualified to share in government?; the loss of liberty when all are not treated as equal. Peel becomes diverted by a discussion of economic equality but the topic that is most fundamental to his own thinking is the 'danger of the depersonalisation of the individual' in 'a world where size predominates'[3].

With an obvious criticism of centralisation in his own denomination Peel says:

> 'A man can feel he is playing his part in the life and work of a small church, but what responsibility has he in the work of the great denomination to which his church belongs, whose affairs are transacted in London by committees which meet at such times that no man can attend who belongs to the class to which Jesus himself belonged?'[4]

Peel acknowledges support for this view in such writers as Jacob Burckhardt, Reflections on History. 'The large State is inimical to freedom', is Peel's summary[5]. He also quotes the chapter 'Towards Democracy' in G.D.H.Cole's Fabian Socialism:

1 Peel, The Christian Basis, p.65 with reference to Professor Woodhouse's discussion of 'segration'. See Woodhouse, op.cit.

2 Peel, ibid, p.62; Woodhouse (1974) p.22 describes the election of the 'Agitators' as a 'striking achievement of democratic organisation'

3 ibid, p.68

4 ibid, pp.68, 69. Peel comments on the Congregational Union on pp.70-1 expressing some fear that organisation might 'stifle the life of the constituent churches', and more fully in his history These Hundred Years, A History of the Congregational Union 1831-1931, London 1931

5 The Christian Basis, p.69; Jacob Burckhardt, Reflections on History, p.37

> 'We must set out to build our new society upon little democracies of neighbours as well as upon little democracies of workers'.[1]

He could also have quoted A.D.Lindsay's earlier book, The Essentials of Democracy (1929), and a BBC talk, I believe in Democracy (1940). Lindsay in acknowledging the original contribution of the Independent congregations to civic democracy feels that a democratic society has to be sustained by free voluntary associations: churches, trade unions, universities associations of all kinds. It needs more than just the consent of people to government. Its better basis is discussion. 'Democracy assumes that each member of the community has something to contribute if it can be got out of him.'[2] Christopher Hill sums up Lindsay's views:

> 'His belief in democracy in this country was in the tough fibres of innumerable, independent, voluntary societies, without whose strength and diversity, mass democracy lies open to a Hitler.'[3]

and Lindsay's daughter, Drusilla Scott, in the same volume, her recent biography, says that 'the W.E.A. and the small religious congregation were his models of democratic success'.[4]

Peel himself might have coined the phrase 'small is beautiful' long before it became fashionable elsewhere but his prime motive would be to safeguard the liberty of the individual. In the lectures Peel argues that 'democracy has its basis in the Christian ideal, in the Christian insistence on the worth of individual personality'.[5] For centuries up to the Reformation the 'individual

1 The Christian Basis, p.79; G.D.H.Cole, Fabian Socialism See also Peel's comment on G.D.H.Cole's Great Britain and the Post War World in CQ 1943, p.185

2 A.D.Lindsay, I believe in Democracy, Oxford 1940, p.8
A.D.Lindsay, The Essentials of Democracy, London 1929, p.37

3 Foreword to Drusilla Scott, A.D.Lindsay, Oxford 1971, p.xv

4 ibid, p.127

5 The Christian Basis of Democracy, p.17

had been submerged in the institution'.[1] He 'now began to come into his own again'. In the 'small groups' of the Elizabethan Separatists 'every individual counted'.[2] The repudiation of 'the control of the State and of the hierarchy tended to produce self reliant and independent men'.[3] Individuals, Peel affirms 'cannot live the good life in solitude' but the purpose of association and of fellowship is 'the development of the individual'.[4] The norm of such fellowships will be the two or three individuals, each with a direct relationship to God.

Peel's democracy is of the type that Forsyth attacked as 'an individualist democracy ... which subjects everything to the private judgement of the living'.[5] Even the fellowship of the two or three would not transform what he elsewhere calls a 'democracy of comfort, egoism and licence'[6] because if the two or three others simply share 'the prejudices, passions and interests that ferment in our raw egoism', then they do not 'deliver us from the little circle of our individuality'.[7] Forsyth went on to say that if this is the type of democracy found in the Free Churches then it is 'too instinctive and intractable' and far 'too incoherent altogether for any common action on the world, beyond that of the sandblast - which is hardly the action of the Church'.[8]

1 The Christian Basis of Democracy, p.32
2 ibid, p.48
3 ibid, p.49
4 ibid, p.50
5 P.T.Forsyth, The Principle of Authority (1913), London 1952,p.273
6 P.T.Forsyth, 'Congregationalism and Liberty' in The Constructive Quarterly Review, Vol.1, No.3, September 1913, pp.496-521, 517
7 The Principle of Authority, p.273
8 'Congregationalism and Liberty', op.cit., p.498

Peel would protest that he does not see the members of any democratic group as simply so many grains of sand whose only unity was that they were blasted in the same direction. He emphasises the importance of 'covenanting together' and of the political significance of this 'long before Hobbes, still longer before Rousseau'. The 'Covenant placed on the participants both responsibility and restraint'. He says that these covenanting communities provided 'training in responsibility which had corporate as well as individual significance'.[1] But the emphasis is again and again on the individual and even the covenant idea is strongly criticised because of the inherent restrictions of being 'tethered' to the Bible.[2] Even when Peel finds some in the seventeenth century who did have 'conceptions of the progressive interpretation of truth' we revert to an idea of an individual or numbers of individuals learning something 'yea though from the meanest of the brethren' rather than to a positive emphasis on a corporate decision. Even the quotation he makes from Milton:

> 'Let truth and falsehood grapple;
> whoever knew truth put to the worst
> in a free and open encounter' [3]

can be interpreted as an emphasis on individual liberty and tolerance of others rather than of real discovery of new truth through group discussion, the Quaker 'sense of the meeting'.

1 The Christian Basis of Democracy, pp. 52-4

2 ibid, pp. 54-5

3 A Brief History, p. 55; Milton, Areopagitica
Peel does not regard Milton, as some have done, as a Congregationalist. Milton is not one of his Congregational Two Hundred.

Rufus Jones[1], the American Quaker historian, and one whose writings Peel certainly knows, does supply the positive case for corporate decision making that is rather weak in Peel. Jones rejects 'a democracy in which individuals remain atomic units' in favour of:

> 'a democracy in which the individuals are fused into a living, organic group so that each individual finds his wisdom and insight heightened through his group life.'[2]

In the experience of such a 'mystical order' the 'individual is overpassed and the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'.[3] In an earlier book, New Studies in Mystical Religion, he has an important chapter on 'The Bearing of Mystical Experience on Organisation and System'.[4] Instead of rejecting organisation and organisers, as Peel does because organisation in Peel's view kills life, Jones commends a positive alternative: an organisation which is 'organic rather than something constructed'. In such an 'organism' the members are fused together into a single whole by a process he calls 'symbiosis'.[5] The meetings of Quakers for business are 'symbiotic'. A project is laid before a meeting. Out of the discussion there emerges a focus on a possible conclusion. Someone identifies this and presents such a unifying conclusion in the hope that this will reflect 'the sense of the meeting'.[6] Peel would surely have agreed with this procedure had he not been so anxious about individual freedom. It could be that despite his

1 Rufus Matthew Jones 1863-1948, American Quaker. Professor of Philosophy, Haverford College, 1904-34. Peel refers to his Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth in The Christian Basis of Democracy, p.36 and alludes to Jones' other writings.

2 Mysticism and Democracy in the English Commonwealth, Cambridge, Mass., 1932, p.25

3 ibid, p.26

4 New Studies in Mystical Religion, London 1927, Chapter IV

5 New Studies, p.167

6 New Studies, p.169

own adoption of John Robinson's 'The Lord hath more truth yet to break forth out of his holy word', Peel was a prisoner of his own Separatist origins. Rufus Jones could find no 'mystical trait' in the writings of Robert Browne.[1] And a contemporary Congregationalist who did seek to recover the mystical aspect of catholic Christianity, and one whom Peel much admired, Robert F.Horton, is like Peel largely concerned with the individual's spiritual development. In The Mystical Quest of Christ he describes the Church as an 'organisation for producing Christ-likeness in individuals'.[2]

Those whose thinking about the Church begins with its corporate unity rather than with its individual constituents have a possible model for democracy in the concept of the Body of Christ. This was argued by an Anglican, C.W.Stubbs, later Dean of Ely, in a university sermon preached at Cambridge in 1884, Christ and Democracy. Aware of the 'dangers of democratic individualism' Stubbs poses as a corrective or complement an emphasis on self sacrifice and association through membership of the Body of Christ.[3]

In a more secular context, L.T.Hobhouse, Democracy and Reaction 1904 argues that Liberal and Socialist views of democracy need to be held together. The one stands for 'the unimpeded development of the human faculty'; the other for the 'solidarity of society'.[4]

1 Rufus M.Jones, Mysticism and Democracy, p.41

2 Robert F.Horton, The Mystical Quest of Christ, London 1923, p.21. This work is acknowledged in Peel's Inevitable Congregationalism, London 1937, p.73. See also Albert Peel and J.A.R.Marriott, Robert Forman Horton, London 1937, especially p.227 on Horton's emphasis on prayer and the practice of the presence of God.

3 C.W.Stubbs, Christ and Democracy, London 1884, pp.8-9. Stubbs shows here and elsewhere a critical interest in Mazzini. See C.W.Stubbs, God and the People, The Religious Creed of a Democrat, Selections from the Writings of Joseph Mazzini, London 1896

4 L.T.Hobhouse, Democracy and Reaction (1904), London 1972

Hobhouse's criticism of distorting democracy by a one sided emphasis does apply to Peel but it should also be noted that in the earlier part of the lectures on The Christian Basis of Democracy Peel seeks to hold in balance, liberty, equality and fraternity and is very conscious of the way each of these ideals became distorted in Revolutionary France.[1] Elsewhere Peel is very much the egalitarian, as in his semi-humorous vision of what a Christian Coronation might be. Instead of the Moderators, the unknown ministers and laity take the leading parts; instead of the editors, the reporters and proof writers. In that year it was made plain 'that Christians were indeed Christians' and 'the people sat up and took notice'.[2] He says too 'a working carpenter or two would be a godsend on some committees' he knows, men of the 'class to which Jesus Himself belonged', and he is concerned that this problem of not really representing the working class applies not only to churches but also to Trade Unions.[3]

He also has a strong concern for education, not least adult education and such movements as the WEA. 'A democracy is a contradiction in terms unless people are qualified to rule.'[4] Here again the early congregations of the Separatists made a significant contribution. Discussions, even if on trivial matters like the hats and dresses of the minister's wife in the congregation at Amsterdam were 'an education in democratic procedure'.[5]

1 The Christian Basis of Democracy, pp.13-16

2 CQ, Vol.XV, 1937, p.289f

3 The Christian Basis, p.69

4 The Christian Basis, p.78

5 The Christian Basis, p.49 and also in reference to the Army Debates of 1647-9: 'These common men were trained in the art of democratic government and their consciences made sensitive, in the Church groups, before they were active in the Army Debates.'

Peel's Church

Peel's Church is to be a Layman's Church, a People's Church.[1] It is a natural, spontaneous consequence of discipleship. Its organisation is simple; its congregationalism inevitable.

Inevitable Congregationalism[2], as a title, sums up Peel's confidence in his own Churchmanship. As a title it was not, as has already been noted, original to Peel. He found it in Powicke[3] and the idea, though not the phrase, in Dale. In the thirty three pages of his History of English Congregationalism Dale surveys the centuries from the Apostles to the Reformation. Some equivalent expression of the apostolic polity had to be found. Monasticism was not the answer - 'these voluntary associations' such as the Beguines, the Beghards, and the Brethren of the Common Lot were not the answer either. They were 'at the best private religious clubs'. Instead Dale found in the Waldensians of the Piedmont valleys a fidelity to the 'simplicity of the Gospel'. In these communities laymen conducted religious services. They 'recovered the great idea of the priesthood of the commonality of the Church'.[4] Peel refers to Dale's History[5] and to his 'The Idea of the Church'[6]

1 Both these expressions are titles of books, issued by Anglicans in the 1960s as part of the general revival of interest in the 'laity'. See Layman's Church edited by Peter Whiteley, Lond.1963 George Goyder, The People's Church, London 1966 has many parallels with Peel's impatience with a Church preoccupied with the privileges of a special order and the maintenance of buildings

2 Inevitable Congregationalism first issued as pamphlet in 1917, reprinted with other essays 1917-34 in 1937

3 F.J.Powicke, The Inevitableness of the Congregational Principle

4 R.W.Dale, History of English Congregationalism edited by A.W.W.Dale, London 1897, pp.30-32

5 Albert Peel, Inevitable Congregationalism, 1917 p.6; 1937 p.16; reference to Dale's History p.35; Peel Brief History p.8

6 Inevitable Congregationalism, 1917 p.12; 1937 p.19

but gives his own summary of these centuries:

> 'Wherever men and women are won for Christ they desire to come together for worship, mutual help and united service, and every such group, once it begins to function, is in principle a Congregational Church, though its members may know nothing of polity, and their theory of church government may never be made explicit.'[1]

The basic unit of the Church is the two or three Christians gathered in Christ's Name. This text recurs like a refrain in nearly all Peel's writings.[2] It is part of his argument that Congregationalism begins in the New Testament and is the natural and inevitable form to which the Church returns when all that is not essential is removed. Peel notes that this text was overlaid by Cyprian's 'where the Bishop is, there is the Church'.[3] He does not observe that two or three bishops are necessary to consecrate one bishop or the way in which Chrysostom puts the text in its original context which is prayer.

Dependence on this text may be seen as part of Peel's acknowledged debt to Dale. Dale's Manual of Congregational Principles[4] could be read as a commentary on Matthew 18, 15-20. But as well as Matthew and Dale, Peel finds this text in 'a manuscript source' of one of the earliest Congregational churches in

1 Peel, A Brief History, p.14

2 See, for example, Inevitable Congregationalism, 1917, p.8 where the text is quoted via John Robinson; ibid, p.16; A Brief History, 1931, pp.9, 10, 12, 27; and Peel's speech in presenting the report 'Congregationalism in Itself, and in its Significance for the Universal Church' where he describes the text as 'the words of Jesus' and 'fundamental words to us'. Proceedings of the Sixth International Congregational Council, Boston/London 1949, pp.35-39 and especially p.36

3 A Brief History, p.12. Here again there is an obvious debt to Dale's History, p.16. Peel would be very interested in Professor Maurice Wiles criticism of Cyprian in Working Papers in Doctrine, London 1976, pp.66-80

4 Manual 1884 but also throughout Dale, e.g. 'The Idea of the Church' in Essays and Addresses, London 1899, pp.99, 117, so that Dale was accused by an Anglican critic of basing his whole polity on the misuse of a single text, H.W.Holden in Brought to Book, London 1887, p.38

England, that of Richard Fitz in London in 1571:

> 'Therefore according to the saying of the almighty our God - in Matthew 18, 20 "where two or three are gathered in my name there am I".' [1]

Whether this text should be used as though it were the 'sheet anchor of Congregationalism' is a point on which Peel and Micklem choose to differ.[2]

Nothing can make a Church more the Church than the presence of Christ with the two or three Christians gathered in his Name. To say otherwise is, in Peel's view, to trust in machinery and organisation. 'Machinery' or 'mechanical things' are terms he applies to baptism, baptismal formulae, and authorised people.[3] In Christian Freedom he denies that 'the perpetual obligation of the two Sacraments' must be a basis for a United Church. If a United Church should make such demands Peel is simply not interested in Union.[4] Even if it did not he might still fear the large organisation. The inevitable Congregationalism of groups of two

1 Peel, The First Congregational Churches, Camb. 1920, p.33 The Congregational Two Hundred, London 1948, p.25 on Richard Fitz

2 Micklem, Congregationalism Today, London 1937, pp.6-8

3 A Brief History, pp.12-13. More moderate was his view in CQ 1923, p.9

4 Christian Freedom, p.67 and p.28 where Peel expresses his 'considerable shock' on reading the Bishop of Gloucester's Theological Commission Report which stated:

> 'Baptism in the name of the Trinity is the necessary bond of the unity of the Christian Church. A condition of union will be the celebration of the Eucharist with the unfailing use of the words of institution.'

Peel was critical of most, if not all, union schemes. See CQ 1930, p.405 on proposals for Church of South India. CQ 1926, p.401 on the United Church of Canada of which Congregationalists were a part. Peel hoped this would not be a precedent. He was not in favour of Congregational-Presbyterian Union and almost his last speech was to say so. See brief report in CYB 1948, p.87 being a report of the May Assembly 1947. He wanted more research into the experience of Congregationalists in united churches.

or three is in itself a Catholic principle.[1] As for the burden of maintaining ministers and buildings - all this to Peel is final proof of his whole thesis.[2]

Does Peel's Church have to be democratically governed, under Christ its Head? There are times when Peel, like Dale, suggests that the true 'Idea of the Church'[3] can exist under many different forms. A Church can be 'in principle a Congregational Church, though its members know nothing of polity'.[4] On the other hand, also like Dale, he bemoans the fact that the Evangelical Revival was not all gain for it added to our churches many who were indifferent to polity.[5] Very significantly he bypasses Dale's agreement with Gladstone that the 'peculiar bias' of the Evangelicals in the Established Church towards 'individualism in religion' was their 'besetting weakness'.[6] A now distinguished contributor[7] to the Congregational Quarterly said in 1932 that he felt the whole emphasis on polity was a mistake. 'There is no enthusiasm

1 Hence the title, Essays Congregational and Catholic, edited by Peel, London 1931. In the Preface Peel said that the essays on Congregational principles 'are definitely constructive and should afford considerable help in the renewed discussions on the union of the Churches'. C.J.Cadoux's essay, pp.53-78, is 'Congregationalism the True Catholicism'.

2 Christian Freedom, London 1938, pp.85-110, 'Freedom in the Church: Ministry and Buildings' and frequent comments in CQ from 1924 onwards. See below 'Peel and Roland Allen'.

3 'The Idea of the Church in Relation to Modern Congregationalism' in R.W.Dale, Essays and Addresses, London 1899, pp.89-177, 91. This is cited in F.J.Powicke, 'The Congregational Churches', in W.B.Selbie (Editor), Evangelical Christianity, London 1911 pp. 82-130,p.83 'Congregationalists have no monopoly of this 'Idea'.

4 A Brief History, p.14.

5 Peel, A Brief History, p.66; Inevitable Congregationalism, 1937, pp.46-7. In both Peel refers to Dale.

6 R.W.Dale, The Evangelical Revival and Other Sermons, London 1880, p.30. Dale refers to Gladstone's article in The British Quarterly Review, July 1879 and reprinted in Gleanings of Past Years, Vol.VII, pp.215-237.

7 Oliver Franks, now Lord Franks, then a Congregationalist and son and grandson of Congregational ministers, now a member of the Society of Friends.

nowadays for principles and systems of church government.'[1] But Dale had noted this feeling in the 1880s and challenged it. Peel in 1926 wanted more people to read Dale's Manual and deplored the fact that many Congregationalists boasted their ignorance of their own church principles.[2]

On the other hand despite the gestures of a super-tolerant catholicism it might be guessed that a Church which has no need of ministers, creeds or sacraments might be one in which a democratic style of government became 'inevitable'. Peel, in fact, writes of the 'essential democracy of the Christian fellowship' as a testimony which the Elizabethan Separatists recovered.[3] The presence of Christ himself in the 'communion of saints' made the Christian fellowship an 'essential democracy in which even the monarch was but a member'. He then refers to Matthew 23, 8, 'One is your Master, and all ye are brethren'[4] - a text which a Congregational Union tract in 1890 had quoted to show that Congregationalism, unlike sacerdotalism, was in touch with 'modern democratic ideas'.[5] In a characteristic passage Peel underlines that church democracy is both essential and natural:

> 'A Church of Christians with Christ in the midst can be moderated by Moderators, counselled by Bishops, guided by ministers, fraternally advised by other churches, and

1 Oliver Franks in CQ, 1932, pp.205-7.

2 Peel, CQ, 1926, p.3.

3 Inevitable Congregationalism, 1937, pp.40-1. This is in the 'Report of the British Commission' on Congregational Polity of which Peel was Chairman.
See also Proceedings of the Fourth International Congregational Council.

4 The Christian Basis of Democracy, p.47.

5 Congregational Union, Short Tracts for the Times on Church Principles, London 1890, Number Two A 'Are Ministers Priests?', p.8. This text also features in local church rule books.

> because it belongs to the One Church it will benefit by all these; but it is itself competent to make the final decision in all matters affecting its faith and practice. The Church of the Living God ... is, fundamentally and finally, in its essentials and not its accidentals, made up of men and women who believe in Christ - in simple, natural democratic fellowship under Him.'[1]

In defining a Congregational Church Peel does not and could not impose a twentieth century definition of democracy. He does use the criterion of election of officers by the congregation. The congregation at Plumbers Hall London c 1567 was 'probably not Congregational in that it did not explicitly and deliberately appoint its own officers'.[2] By contrast Richard Fitz's congregation had a covenant, exercised discipline and elected its own officers. This in Peel's judgement gives it some claim to be the first Congregational Church.[3] In The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne that he had begun to edit 'the gathering of voices and the consent of the people who is meet to be chosen' is a distinct feature of Browne's polity.[4] And although Dale's concept of 'the Idea of the Church' may appear to be capable of expression in different forms Dale had insisted that no:

> 'adequate reasons have ever arisen for suppressing the ecclesiastical independence of separate congregations and depriving them of the free choice of their own officers and the ultimate control of their own ecclesiastical affairs.'[5]

1 Peel, Inevitable Congregationalism, pp.73-4 being part of his address to the Congregational Union in 1923; ibid, pp.68-77. Moderators were then new to Congregationalism. The first Moderators were inducted in November 1919. Peel conceded there was a problem of ministerial settlements but was never convinced. Moderators were the answer, e.g. CQ, 1924, p.4.

2 A Brief History, pp.28-9; The First Congregational Churches, p.7. The congregation did desire to be like the best Reformed churches but 'did not hold any specifically Congregational view of the Church'.
Peel also notes, ibid, p.13, that exact titles: Separatist, Presbyterian, Congregational are not appropriate to the fluid period of 1560-80.

3 The First Congregational Churches, p.38.

4 The Writings of Robert Harrison and Robert Browne, edited by Albert Peel and Leyland Carlson, London 1953, p.341 from Browne, A Book which Sheweth the Life and Manners of all True Christians, Middleburgh 1582.

5 Dale, Essays and Addressses, 'The Idea of the Church', p.91.

Peel evidently agreed with Dale.

Does Peel commend the democratic ways of Congregationalism to the whole Church? Yes and no. We do not find in Peel as we do in Forsyth and Micklem that Congregationalism has just as much to learn from other traditions as it has to give. Congregationalism is inevitable and has a mission to say so: 'despite all the discussions about union, it is inevitable that the Church of Christ should be Congregational'.[1] Some have felt that towards the end of his life he envisaged a new Dark Age for the Church - a point I shall question in the next section - but at least in 1931 he thought the spread of education and the more widespread acceptance of responsibility augured well for democratic churches.[2] The reservations he has concern the failure to adapt or to revert instead to the past, whether in creeds, attitudes to the Bible or polity. It is good to want to get back to the primitive form of government but only if 'that government happens best to fit the Church for its task today'.[3] But generally his conviction remains that where Congregationalism fails it is not the fault of its polity. The discussion in Christian Freedom on 'The Adaptation of Methods' says nothing about methods of Church government.[4]

Peel's Church is a Layman's Church. The campaign he waged against preoccupation with the paid ministry and the expensive properties was integral to his thinking about the Church. There was too much talk about orders, a danger of developing a clerical

1 CQ, 1925, p.401.
2 A Brief History, p.91.
3 Thirty Five to Fifty, London 1938, p.144 from CQ, 1936.
4 Christian Freedom, 1938, pp.111-131.

caste.[1] Laymen did not always get value for money.[2] There was a stifling of lay initiative and enterprise. One large church of 600 would be more effective as thirty groups of twenty.[3] The ministry might be helpful, even necessary, but it was not essential.[4] On this point Peel's contemporaries had wavered in agreement. But when a layman, Gerard Ford, succeeded in altering a Report to the Union that said that the ministry was essential he earned a place in the proud company of Peel's Congregational Two Hundred.[5] And Peel was also delighted that this same layman had been invited to preside at the Communion at an important local assembly.[6] Peel like Dale believed in lay celebration but unlike Dale did not believe very fervently in the Communion. At least not in its clerical celebration. But in 1939 he imagines a report in the Birmingham Post for 1941. All the members of the Church of Christ were gathered in private houses. Members of the Friends were there too. Not more than twelve in each home, they shared a sacramental meal. There were many thousands of such groups and

1 Peel, Thirty Five to Fifty, London 1938, p.178 'Is it being sufficiently realised that the churches are composed of lay men and women for whose benefit the ministry exists?' CQ, 1926, p.4.

2 CQ, 1934, p.147, Peel's reply to the 'smart title' in the Methodist Times, 'Funeral Peel for Ministers'. Peel explains his objection is to full time, paid, professional ministry. Many ministers cease to study. 'Can it be said that a paid ministry has produced a class of men less mercenary, more unselfish, less envious, and more self controlled than the members of the churches?' Christian Freedom, p.105.

3 CQ, 1933, p.150.

4 CQ, 1933, p.405.

5 Congregational Two Hundred, pp.244-5. Gerard Ford 1849-1934, in business in Manchester, challenged the Congregationalists' Statement for the Lausanne Faith and Order Conference which said that ministry was essential. See CYB, 1930/31, p.83; CQ, 1929, p.274; The Nature of the Church (R.Newton Flew, editor), pp.175-6; Peel, These Hundred Years, London 1931, p.404.

6 CQ, 1934, p.405, Centenary Assembly at Manchester.

there were being added those whom God was saving.[1]

For such reasons, it is a mistake to say as Grieve did at Peel's Memorial Service that Peel envisaged a Dark Age for the Church when the faith could only be kept alive in cells and cottage meetings.[2] Peel saw nothing gloomy in such a prospect.[3] His great fears always were the big organisation[4]; the large impersonal congregation[5]; the weak church meeting which left all decisions in the hands of the minister or church secretary[6]. In today's parlance, Peel's Church was essentially a grass roots Church, a layman's Church which ministers might help but must not hinder.

1 CQ, 1939, p.355.

2 Alex J.Grieve in CQ, 1959, p.10.

3 e.g. Peel's Forecast in 1934, CQ, 1934, p.5 'a host of churches meeting in rooms and houses, from which will flow, as they have no minister or building exhausting their gifts, a continual stream of good works'. Peel imagines this may be thought 'revolutionary' or 'visionary' but certainly not a Dark Age.

4 e.g. CW, May 20th, 1948, p.5 where Peel envisaged a top heavy Congregational Union of 1982 with 524 secretaries, 84 Moderators, 120 Professors and churches paying 90p per £1 to keep the machine going.

5 e.g. CQ, 1933, p.150 'a church of 600 who hardly know each other' and his own preference in many respects for Great Harwood's village atmosphere versus Clapton Park, London.

6 CQ, 1930, p.131 'In the individual church, the decay of the church meeting and the lack of a sense of responsibility in the church members mean that more and more power is left in the hands of the executive - the minister, the deacons, or even the church secretary.'
In CW, July 15th, 1948 Peel asked: Which is the greater danger - the growing power of ministers and denominational officials or the apathy of church members?

Peel's Church Democracy in Practice

Even after he ceased to be in pastoral charge of a local church Peel was active in many denominational committees. This and his position as editor of the Quarterly provided the practical experience for his comments on the workings of Church democracy.

He would like to see more young people represented in denominational committees and assemblies[1], partly for their benefit, partly because he dreaded the traditionalism of a gerontocracy. He was fond of noting the part played by young men in the pioneering days of Congregationalism.[2]

He believes in devolution. The system of Moderators about which he had always been suspicious he would alter by having more moderators, some fifty, elected by local groups of ministers as their approved counsellors and advisers.[3] He approves of Algernon Wells' delineation of the responsibilities of a local church, a county union and an assembly. This starts with the local church and only moves outwards as help becomes necessary or the benefits of cooperation become obvious. Peel himself would say with Wells:

> 'whatsoever any one church can do for the common cause of religion by its own independent unassisted efforts, that let it do, without help and without interference'[4]

One of his objections to the proposals for union with the

1 CQ, 1935, p.275.

2 A Brief History is addressed to 'A Young Congregationalist' and emphasises the youthfulness of John Penry, the Pilgrim Fathers, etc. See also comments on youth in Thirty Five to Fifty, p.15. CW, Nov.10th, 1949.

3 CQ. 1939, p.150 in response to CUEW Settlements and Removals Commission. In These Hundred Years, London 1931, pp.372-82 Peel gives a balanced account of the origin of the scheme of Moderators and his modest applause for the good they have done.

4 A Brief History, p.75; Christian Democracy, p.70; Congregational Two Hundred, pp.142-4

Presbyterians was that local churches and ministers would not be directly represented in the Assembly and there would be too many ex-officio members whose permanent position gave them power over against an assembly changing in personnel.[1]

Responsible discussion is a vital part of his practical programme. He deplores the way in which business at the Congregational Assembly is rushed[2] and was perturbed by the lack of informed discussion in local churches on the issues of Presbyterian-Congregational union.[3] His learning provides a bonus here with a quotation from Milton: 'a man may be a heretic in the truth if he believes things only because his pastor says so'.[4] 'Congregationalism has suffered too much in the past by repressing its differences, and there are still those with a fear complex about a debate on the Union platform'[5] he said in 1927. Possibly, the Congregational Quarterly became less of a forum for debate within the denomination as the years advanced but in earlier issues regular readers could weigh the views of Micklem versus Peel[6], Manning versus Powicke[7]. He complained of the intolerance at the 1931 Assembly: 'Congregationalists above all people ought to set the example of liberty and toleration to minorities'[8]. Sidney Berry

1 CW, September 9th, 1948, p.5.

2 CQ, 1930, p.259. Objection to rushing through reports of a dozen committees in half an hour.

3 CW, September 9th, 1948, p.5. In fact according to CW May Assembly Report (CW, May 19th, 1949) two thirds of Congregational churches did not discuss the Report at all, or did not send in comment.

4 CW, September 9th, 1948, p.5.

5 CQ, 1927, p.259.

6 CQ, 1938, p.124 critical review of Nathaniel Micklem's Congregationalism Today, London 1937. On Micklem's Congregationalism and the Church Catholic, London 1943, Peel says, CQ, 1943, p.204 'we much prefer his criticising Congregationalism in the open rather than sniping at it from behind an anonymous column'.

7 Manning v. Powicke in CQ, 1928, p.139f deals with status of minister in older Dissent, etc.

8 CQ, 1931, p.257.

said of Peel that though he was usually 'agin the government' he bore no malice.[1] Peel concluded his history of the Congregational Union with another apt quotation, this time from John Ely:

> 'Discussion will necessarily arise; court discussion but avoid all bitterness. God, I trust, will guide and bless you.'[2]

Like almost everybody else, Peel quotes Dale's panegyric 'To be at Church Meeting ...'[3] and is aware this ideal is not often attained. He quotes R.F.Horton's lament: 'They do not know what a Church Meeting is. In fifty years I have failed to teach them'.[4] Peel approved of Horton's attempts at Lyndhurst Road to show his people that a Church meeting was not merely for business. That it was primarily the place where Christ the Head is present with his people. That it was to be:

> 'a centre of spiritual feeling and also of practical activity, so that the practical questions of the day might be brought into the light of Christ'.[5]

This is Peel's description and it was his own ideal too:

> 'In the perplexing personal problems with which the Christian is confronted today, why should he not be able to take counsel with his own Church fellowship and be guided thereby.'[6]

How the Church Meeting functioned at Clapton Park we shall note in the next section; at Lyndhurst Road he did concede that one practical difficulty was that the church was too big - 402 members in 1885; 1,200 in 1900. We are back to the inevitably

1 CW, November 10th, 1949, p.2. Berry was Minister Secretary of the International Congregational Council, formerly Secretary CUEW.

2 These Hundred Years, p.410. Prayer of John Ely on his death-bed 1847.

3 A Brief History, p.37

4 Albert Peel and J.A.R.Marriott, Robert Forman Horton, London 1937, pp.185-6.

5 ibid, pp.185-6.

6 CQ, 1935, p.404 reprinted in Peel, Thirty Five to Fifty, p.182f.

small Congregationalism. Even so, Horton himself felt that the story of Lyndhurst Road in its past fifty years vindicated its polity.[1]

Readers of the Quarterly were made aware of low attendances at Church Meeting, and that the problem was not new. Dale he discovered turned down an invitation to Clapton Park in 1871 because less than half the members had voted for him.[2] In 1941 D.W.Langridge used the expression: 'where the Church Meeting still survives'.[3] Peel in 1943 spoke of its decay.[4] He blamed the levity with which some entered into membership. It is not clear whether he agreed with a contributor in 1935 who would make attendance at Church Meeting the one test of Church Membership.[5] He did agree with this writer's insistence on Church discipline and suspects that there are some churches which have not exercised this prerogative for a generation.[6] More congenial to his nature is to put the emphasis on voluntariness and keenness and to accept as inevitable a sort of 'imperium in imperio', or a 'real church' of those who are 'entirely consecrated to Christ'.[7] Micklem took great exception to these phrases[8] but the difference was semantic as well as theological. In the Church as a whole Micklem

1 Robert Forman Horton, p.143.

2 CQ, 1930, p.65f.

3 CQ. 1941, p.315. CQ, 1932 reported a survey by the Lancashire Congregational Union 1929-31 that noted 'the numerical failure of Church Meetings'.

4 CQ, 1943, p.204.

5 CQ, 1935, p.451.

6 CQ, 1926, p. 401

7 Peel, Inevitable Congregationalism, London 1917, pp.12-13; 1937, pp.20-1.

8 Micklem, Congregationalism Today, London 1937, p.21. Micklem says none are entirely consecrated to Christ but all church members stand within the covenant of grace. Micklem accepts a greater distinction in the qualification for office and that for membership than does Peel. ibid, pp.11-13.

did not expect everybody to be capable of democracy; Peel did not expect them all to be 'keen'. Peel could have argued that in the previous century the actual Membership of most Congregational churches was a very much smaller proportion of those who attended than was now the case.

Peel's Church Democracy in Practice II, Clapton Park, London

The Minutes of the Church Meetings at Clapton Park Congregational Church, 1922-1934, add flesh to the bones of the previous discussion. First they illustrate some of the technical problems of democratic systems. A unanimous decision to call a minister is regarded as a sign of Divine approval, but what happens when there are two conflicting calls on the same man, one to remain in his present pastorate, the other to accept an invitation to a church like Clapton Park? The United Reformed Church believes that this is not a matter to be left entirely to an individual minister and the two congregations involved. The wider Church through its District Councils must give concurrence to a call and also agree that it is right for a man to leave his present position.

When Henry Harries left Clapton Park after a ministry of twenty-seven years, Peel's was not the first name to be considered. The church approached J.Philip Rogers of Cardiff even though they had been advised he was 'not moveable'. He agreed to preach one Sunday and there was a unanimous resolution in his favour. But after much thought Rogers decided that it was God's will that he stay in Cardiff. There were a few abstentions for the resolution to invite Dr Peel but it was again a clear decision of a local church.[1] But Peel found it hard to decide whether it was right to leave Great Harwood and perhaps it was not. [2] The offer of a stipend

1 The Church Book Number 5, 1907- of Clapton Park Congregational Church, Hackney, London, pp 148-72 (The Church Book , Minutes of Deacons' Meetings, and other documents are now in the care of Hackney Archives Department, Rose Lipman Library, De Beauvoir Road, Hackney, London N1 5SQ)

2. Letter from Peel to the church, April 7th 1922, inserted in the Church Book. A London ministry enabled Peel to share fully in the work of the denomination, including his founding and editing the Congregational Quarterly, but in other respects Peel was more at home in a smaller church in a small town.

that was probably twice the sum he had been used to would not help any man's judgment and highlights the inequalities of ultra-Independency.[1]

Had anyone wished to reconsider the call they were given at least two opportunities in his first seven years. Peel twice offered his resignation. The first was for family reasons: his daughter's ill health necessitated a move to the suburbs.[2] On the second occasion there was the possibility of full time work for the Independent Press. On this occasion it was noted by Peel that the church 'is passing through a critical period'. This in October 1929. The church therefore had the opportunity to review his leadership. 'We tremble to think what your withdrawel from the leadership would mean just now', the deacons said.[3] In both instances the church acted with great dignity and there was no division, or at least none that is recorded.

When Peel did resign in January 1934 he included in his considerations: familiarity between a congregation and a minister after a certain time 'prevents their speedy response; seven to ten years are probably long enough; the need for 'resilience' to withstand depression in the changing circumstances of a congregation; and, as we might expect to hear, the burden of maintaining buildings and keeping the 'manifold work going....when I felt I ought to be dealing with individuals'. These things are mentioned and not the pressing demands of his literary activities. He would miss, he said, 'the pastoral relationship in regard both to adults and to children'.[4] Eric Routley would say that Congregationalism is about 'government through friendship'.[5]

1 Letter to Dr Peel, March 9th 1922, Church Book, pp. 167-8 The stipend offered was £500.

2 Church Book, pp. 211-14, November 1925

3 Church Book, p. 245, October 1929

4 Church Book, p. 300, January 19th 1934

5 Congregationalism and Unity, London 1962, p. 10

There was much discussion about the best method of electing deacons. When Peel arrived the system in operation was rather parliamentary. Members in 1921 had been presented with a printed ballot paper with fourteen nominations, including two women. They had to come along to the church one evening between 6pm and 9.30pm and vote for not more than seven.[1] The final election took place at a Church Meeting. Peel or some members evidently found the system rather too complicated but efforts to simplify the procedure began in November 1922 and were still being attempted in May 1930.[2]

These deliberations give some indication of levels of participation. The membership of the church in January 1921 was 613. 221 ballot papers were received.[3] On May 1st 1930, the Minutes record 'Dr Peel expressed the wish that all would exercise the right to vote'.[4] The responce was generally between 30% - 40 % . Between 250 - 300 members were present at the first meeting to invite Philip Rogers. Later 149 voted in favour, none against.[5] For Peel's call we are simply told it was 'a large meeting'.[6] Sometimes not so large. A vote on Sunday observance (March 1931) was defeated 19:12 and we are simply informed that 'quite a number abstained'.[7]

Peel promised in July 1930 that Church Meetings would be more interesting - this is his implication - , with a special topic each month, and would not be 'merely for business'.[8] Nothing seems to have come of this suggestion. Agendas had included resolutions

1 Church Book, June 16th 1921, p. 158

2 ibid, p. 185, a committee set up to examine the method could not agree on an alternative. See also pp. 221, 249-50.

3 ibid, pp 164, 158

4 ibid, p. 250

5 ibid, pp. 156-7

6 ibid, p. 167

7 ibid, p. 263

8 ibid, p. 256. The topics would include various facets of the work of the church

on the sale of liquor in a local hall, the showing of films unsuitable for children; political resolutions, including support for Lady Astor's Bill of 1923; denominational matters, in particular responses to the new system of Moderators and the Congregational Union's campaign against the Revised Prayer Book (1928).[1] Of these the question of the Moderators is of most interest. It was Peel, I suspect, who persuaded the Church Meeting to remind the Union of the original intention, still to be implemented, that Moderators should act in council, that is be part of a new system of Provincial committees. Further, that it should be the Provinces that should elect the Moderators.[2] Both these pleas amount to a call for greater democracy.

Church Meeting before Peel had been used to political action, as Peel the historian noted in an article, 'A Congregational Church as seen in its Minutes, Clapton Park 1849-1929'.[3] They had protested about the Education Bill (1902) and the Licensing Bill (1904), and approved the candidature of Mr Albert Spicer as Liberal nominee for Central Hackney. Dale would not have approved. Neither would Forsyth.[4] Peel offers no comment.

Not all matters that might have been debated in Church Meeting on the internal affairs of the church were discussed.

1 Church Book, March 29th 1928. The Meeting accepted the resolutions of the Council of CUEW as printed in its leaflet but in a more moderate form.

2 ibid, January 31st 1924.

3 TCHS, Vol.X 1927-9, pp. 267-76

4 Neither Dale nor Forsyth approved of the Church, as Church, acting directly in politics. Micklem was highly critical of Rome's pressure group politics. Up to 1906 Congregation-alists could be unanimous in politics and Albert Spicer belonged to an impeccable Congregational family.

Ironically, a plan to hold 'Question Services' appears to have been announced and no questions asked![1] Peel evidently took the view he expressed in Christian Freedom:

> 'The Church has expressed its confidence in me by calling me to conduct its worship, and has left the matter entirely to me'.

The Church Meeting, he explained,assumed that he would not abuse this freedom. There were exceptions but these were rare. Hence 'the attention attracted to such an aberration as Dr Orchard's experiments at King's Weigh House Church, London'.[2] What Peel did not acknowledge was that Orchard had the authorisation of Church Meeting for his 'experiments'.[3] Peel's method was more autocratic.

The point made by Forsyth about the'democratic note'in common prayer applies here.[4] A Parish Church with its set liturgies, and its parishioners each in possession of a Book of Common Prayer, is more democratic than a Congregational Church that never debates and decides its own worship. There was a touch of self righteousness in the Congregationalist reaction to Parliament discussing the Church of England at prayer (1928).[5]

1 Church Book, July 31st 1930; Peel, Thirty-five to Fifty, London 1938, pp 37-40 'Question Services'. One such question tackled was 'Is Democracy Doomed?'. Six to eight such services were held each year and were,he says,popular.

2 Christian Freedom, London 1938, pp. 46-7.

3 I owe this comment to Elaine Kaye, author of an unpublished study of W.E.Orchard, and of the History of the King's Weigh House Church, London 1968.

4 Forsyth, The Soul of Prayer, London 1916, p. 56.

5 The CUEW Resolution on the Revised Prayer Book (1928) said the Church should be 'at liberty, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, to order its own worship...without any interference on the part of the State'. Copy in the Church Book, March 29th 1928.

Albert Peel and Roland Allen

The parallels with Roland Allen (1868-1947)[1] are suggested by Peel himself who frequently commends Allen's writings. They are strengthened by the fact that though Allen was and remained an Anglican in the Catholic tradition[2] many of his closest colleagues were of the Reformed tradition[3]. Added relevance comes from his conviction that the local church should be 'self-supporting, self-governing, self-extending', while the revival of interest in his thinking in the 1960s suggests that there may also be a similar sympathy for Peel.

The idea that the native church on the 'mission field' should be self-governing probably originated with the CMS missionary Henry Venn and the Native Church Organisation of the mid-nineteenth century.[4] Ill health early prevented Allen from much missionary service abroad but what he and others saw and read convinced him of the ineffectiveness of missionary methods. He voiced these doubts in 1912 in Missionary Methods: St.Paul's or Ours? but was not really listened to until the next decade. There was a second edition of this work in 1927; the publication in the same year of The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church; and the next year, Voluntary Clergy Overseas[5]. Peel in the Quarterly, 1929 was quick

1 Works about Roland Allen include David M.Paton, editor, Reform of the Ministry, a Study in the Work of Roland Allen, London 1968; Biographical Memoir by Alexander McCleish in The Ministry of the Spirit, Selected Writings of Roland Allen, London 1960.

2 Paton, op.cit., p.19 or p.25, 'Allen must be understood as some kind of Pentecostal Catholic'.

3 These included Alexander McCleish, missionary of the Church of Scotland; the Congregationalist, Sidney James Wells Clark, 1862-1930; Thomas Cochrane, Presbyterian missionary with the LMS in Mongolia.

4 Paton, op.cit., p.82; Norman Goodall, A History of the London Missionary Society, 1895-1945, Oxford 1954, p. 7

5 Much of Allen's work was constantly revised. Voluntary Clergy, 1923, then Voluntary Clergy Overseas, 1928. Both were reworked for The Case for Voluntary Clergy, 1930.

to commend all three titles.[1]

Allen insists that the Church in the New Testament is either the Church Universal or the local Church which possesses the full rights and powers of the Universal Church in that place.[2] But the responsibility of local congregations is often prevented by a new form of prelacy, the prelacy of foreign committees.[3] The risks of giving new converts self-government have to be taken.[4] These risks are often exaggerated. There is more danger of heresy from people who think they are learned in the faith than from ignorance;[5] when foreign missionaries were expelled from Madagascar that very young church had remained very orthodox[6]. Allen argued in an article in 1902, 'A Church Policy for North China', that:

> 'the danger of mistakes ... of little schisms, is not so serious as the danger of keeping the Church in swaddling bands.'[7]

and in his book on Sidney James Wells Clark, a Vision of Foreign Missions, 1937 he quotes his Congregationalist layman friend:

> 'Dependence is not a good preparation for independence' ... 'It may, I think, be taken for granted, that the ability to administer the affairs of a community will always be found within that community, and will grow with its life.'[8]

1 CQ, 1929, p.165. In CQ, 1924, p.242 Peel reviewed Voluntary Clergy, 'We are not sure that Mr.Allen's thought provoking book does not point to the ultimate solution of the problem of the ministry.'

2 Allen, Jerusalem: A Critical Review of "The World Mission of Christianity", London 1928, pp.22-3.

3 An Examination of our Mission Activities, London 1927, p.11.

4 The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church, London 1927, pp.22, 55.

5 The Establishment of the Church in the Mission Field, London 1927, p.11.

6 Allen in S.J.W.Clark, p.109 refers to Madagascar Revisited. Only 15 years old, that church managed on its own for 25 years, expanded tenfold and produced no new heresy.

7 First published in the Church of England paper, The Guardian, Summer 1902, reprinted in Paton, op.cit., pp.49-57, p.53.

8 Allen, S.J.W.Clark, London 1937, pp.112, 111. Cf Allen, The Spontaneous Expansion, London 1927, p. 55,'The vast majority of our converts are being educated in dependence'.

Clark, who had been a very successful businessman, tended to argue that native leaders, like branch managers, only got out of their depths if expected to operate systems which were 'foreign' to them.

'Spontaneous' features in the title of one of Allen's books and the merits of spontaneity pervade his other writings. 'All externally directed activity obscures the Spirit'.[1] In Pentecost and the World he noted that in Luke-Acts the Spirit was given to the whole body of Christians.[2] The Holy Spirit had to be manifested in free 'spontaneous activity'.[3] The local congregation was a 'kingdom of priests' and had a ministry.[4] But Allen was convinced that each local congregation needed ministers. The Church in ordination sets apart those who already have the Spirit. Ordination does not confer the Spirit.[5] Christ will see that each congregation has the gifts of the Spirit necessary for its work. Bishops, who are preferably local, town bishops, have a task of selecting as leaders men who are held in highest respect by the congregation.[6] Ministers are a gift to the Church, not the Church to ministers and the Church as a whole retains responsibility for the good conduct of its officers.[7]

The Case for Voluntary Clergy is not only, or even primarily, economic. It has to do with the alienation of the laity from the

1 The Case for Voluntary Clergy, London 1930, p.234.
2 Pentecost and the World, Oxford 1917, reprinted in The Ministry of the Spirit, London 1960, pp.1-62, p.40.
3 An Examination of our Mission Activities, p.31.
4 Pentecost and the World, 1917, op.cit., p.40.
5 ibid, p.40.
6 Spontaneous Expansion, pp.205, 214.
7 ibid, pp.177, 206.

clergy and the way in which the celebration of the sacraments has become attached to the clergy and not to the local church.[1] Allen is critical of the order of Lay Readers as less than half a ministry because they cannot celebrate the sacraments. If a deacon can baptise, why can he not also celebrate the eucharist?[2] In The Family Rite[3], 1943, he wished to see heads of households celebrating in their own family circle, as he himself had now done for years. He felt that his own ordination was not significant here. Were he beginning again he would not be ordained into a stipendiary order which regarded the Rite as its own prerogative.[4]

Allen had himself become a 'voluntary clergyman' in 1907 when he resigned from the living at Chalfont St.Peter. The issue, as explained in his letter to the parishioners, had nothing to do with the burden of financing the clergy. Rather it would seem that Allen could no longer conform to the discipline, or lack of it, in the Church of England practice of baptisms and burials.[5] How sad, and ironic, that Peel should complain of Allen's 'narrow Anglicanism'. Peel naturally saw in Allen an exponent of the 'inevitableness of Congregationalism'.[6]

Allen and Peel could belong to the same Church. They are both missionaries, highly critical of the ineffectiveness of the over organised Church, the prelacy of committees. They are both Christian democrats in the sense that they are prepared to trust

1 As an example of alienation of the laity Allen notes that teas and whist drives in their own mission halls have taken the place of communion because the people are able to do these things for themselves. Voluntary Clergy, 1939, p.268.

2 The Family Rite, 1943 in David M.Paton, editor, Reform of the Ministry, pp.215-6.

3 ibid

4 ibid, p.202

5 This letter is printed in The Ministry of the Spirit, London 1960, pp.193-7 and is dated November 25th, 1907.

6 Peel in CQ, 1931, p.8 in a comment on Allen's plea for 'voluntary clergy'.

the people of God to the leading of the Spirit. They believe in spontaneity in the sense of freedom for the Spirit.

Today, within the Church Catholic, people still read Allen. Few, even in the Reformed tradition, and probably not outside, read Peel. Both men worked in specific historical contexts and many of their judgements are dated. But Allen shows that it is possible to be both 'congregational' and Catholic, to advocate a People's Church or a Laymans' Church without in any way denigrating ministry or sacraments, to adapt to the future and yet be loyal to what the past has given. When a leading Reformed theologian, Hans-Ruedi Weber, writes in Laity[1], a journal of the World Council of Churches, on 'The Spontaneous Missionary Church', the allusion is obviously to Allen but many of the convictions expressed are Peel's too. Through Allen and those who still read him many of Peel's convictions about the self governing congregation are still heard in the wider Church, for neither the laity nor the Spirit could ever be denominational matters.

Conclusion

The revival of interest in the self propagating and self governing, indigenous church of Roland Allen and others may find other contemporary expression in a sort of 'Do-It-Yourself'

1 Laity, Number 4, November 1957, reprinted in Laity, Reprints from Numbers 2-6, May 1962, pp.71-85.
Another example of Allen's contribution to more recent ecumenical discussion is New Forms of Ministry, edited by David M.Paton, published for the WCC, Edinburgh 1965. See especially the Preface by Lesslie Newbigin (CSI and now URC), p.9.

religion. Clifford Hill[1], a minister of the Congregational Federation, and a sociologist, has recently suggested that this may be a factor behind the considerable growth of Pentecostal type churches. Peel himself spoke sharply against those who would sneer at Samuel Smiles and his Mutual Improvement Society[2] and commended a Churchmanship which was simple, natural, spontaneous, small and manageable, an 'essential democracy'. We know what Forsyth thought about any suggestion of Do-It-Yourself religion and we know that Augustine had the better of the argument with Self-Help in Pelagius. But the questions posed by Peel and Hill, by Allen, by Charismatic groups and the House Churches,must not be brushed aside too hastily. At his best, what Peel was asking was how can all church members really feel involved in the life and witness of the Church, really participate and share decisions. One senses that he cared about such questions rather more than Forsyth or Micklem and for that we should be grateful and can excuse the man who had asked 'are water, bread and wine of more significance than going about doing good'.[3]

1 Clifford Hill was President of the Congregational Federation 1976-7. As a sociologist he is best known for his work on Race Relations. He is the author of How Colour Prejudiced is Britain?, London 1965; West Indian Migrants and London Churches, London 1963, etc. and of Towards the Dawn, What's Going to Happen to Britain, London 1980. It was suggested earlier that Peel himself would have joined the Congregational Federation.

2 Peel, Thirty Five to Fifty, London 1938, p.201.

3 CQ, 1939, p.148.

NATHANIEL MICKLEM 1888-1976[1]

The United Reformed Church (1972) - a 'Micklem Church'? Discuss. Nathaniel Micklem always was a controversial figure, a subject for discussion, but his importance for Congregationalism and the Reformed Church can be agreed. R.Tudur Jones surveying the Congregationalism of 1930-1962 concluded:

> 'Dr Micklem has been more responsible than any other single person for creating a new attitude amongs Congregationalists towards their theology, their churchmanship, and their public worship.[2]

The nation recognised his wider services and made him a Companion of Honour in 1974. He then, as he remarked,'became respectable but, alas, respectability is not one of the virtues of the New Testament'.[3] His ecumenical outlook, his persistent wooing of the Presbyterians, his appeals to his own Church to reform its order and its worship did not always earn him respect. Yet in so far as the United Reformed Church embodies many of his convictions it may be called 'a Micklem Church'.[4] It is a sign of his influence.

That influence was mediated in three ways. First, his writings; second, his being Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford 1932-53; third, official services to and on behalf of Congregationalism.

1 A full biography there may never be as he destroyed many personal papers claiming that all we needed to know was already in his books, not least of all in his poetry. He wrote an autobiography, The Box and the Puppets 1888-1953, London 1957. His contemporary Dr Norman Goodall in JURCHS, Vol. 1, No. 10, 1977 gives a full biographical outline. Dr Donald Sykes, present Principal of Mansfield, has contributed the entry for the new edition of DNB. See also Ralph Micklem, A History of the Micklem Family, Stanmore 1954.

2 R.Tudur Jones, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962, London 1962, p.450

3 Recalled by Revd. Dr John Huxtable, Memorial Service 1977

4 I owe this suggestion to conversations with Dr Clyde Binfield.

He probably reached most of his public through his regular column in The British Weekly, an amazing output both in range and extent. Much of the comment is on books or denominational affairs. There are recurring themes - 'The Future of Nonconformity'[1]; the question of liberal democracy. The columns were written under a pseudonym and sometimes the Principal of Mansfield also appeared as author in the same edition to express similar views. Albert Peel once remarked 'Nobody agrees with Dr Micklem unless it be 'Ilico' of The British Weekly'. Ilico contributed almost every week for thirty years, 1932-1962.[2] During the War he was noted for his broadcast talks and always there were letters to The Times. Many of his many books are addressed to the general reader, who may, like the author, be agnostic about many things. He mastered many themes, Old and New Testament, Systematic Theology, Comparative Religion, but few of his books have detailed footnotes for a specialist reader.

As Principal of Mansfield he helped to transform the dominant ethos of the College, and through it of the denomination, from theological liberalism to Reformed Churchmanship, or what Bernard Manning called, 'Orthodox Dissent'.[3] Like Forsyth before him, and Karl Barth his contempoary, this theological shift was first a personal experience and as

1 BW, January 16th, 23rd, 30th, February 6th 1936

2 A collection, No More Apologies and other British Weekly Papers by Ilico, was published in 1940

3 Bernard Lord Manning, Essays in Orthodox Dissent (1939), London 1953. Micklem himself accepts this phrase in his preface to The Doctrine of our Redemption (1943), London 1948

with Barth and Forsyth conversion embraced Churchmanship.[1] Micklem and John Whale, then President of Cheshunt College, Cambridge, helped Bernard Manning to draft that very significant letter in 1939 'To the Ministers of Christ's Holy Gospel in the Churches of the Congregational Order'. They said:

> 'As Congregationalists we have received from our fathers a doctrine and a practice of churchmanship that has no exact parallel in Christendom'.....If our churches are in peril, it is because they have forgotten what they are.'

They listed as 'the means of grace : Bible, Sacrament, Public Worship, Church Meeting'. They were glad to 'have catholic churchmanship without Judaic clericalism' and the 'apostolic faith' held in 'evangelical freedom'. [2]

Eric Routley, student at Mansfield in the War years, looking back in 1961 called this letter 'one of the historic utterances of Congregationalism.. because it crystalised a movement of thought which from that date (1939) began to spread through the churches'.[3] In Daniel Jenkins' The Nature of Catholicity there is a new assertiveness. This Congregationalist tells the Church that to its traditional marks of Scripture Proclamation, the Sacraments and the Apostolic Ministry there should be added the Church Meeting.[4] Ilice found the book rather pontifical but called it 'a vindication of Reformed Churchmanship such as, since Forsyth, we have not seen'.[5] Other signs of this new 'movement of

1 Micklem had great respect for Barth but was never a Barthian, see BW, December 1st, 1955. He liked Forsyth but 'he must be sipped, not taken in draughts'. BW, December 18th 1952.

2 Micklem, The Box and the Puppets , pp. 93-9 Routley, below p.164f

3 Eric R Routley, The Story of Congregationalism, London 1961, p.94

4 Daniel T Jenkins, The Nature of Catholicity, London 1942 p.105

5.

thought' are evident in the works of two of Micklem's research students: John W Grant, Free Churchmanship in England 1870 - 1940, and Horton Davies, The Worship of the English Puritans and his five volume study of Worship and Theology in England .[1] Both men seek to interpret their own churchmanship in an ecumenical context. When re-reading the former book by Grant, Micklem modestly noted: 'I must have been more closely involved in things that matter than I had supposed'. [2]

He might have begun his ministry as successor to Alexander Mackennal, one of Dale's pulpit peers, at Bowdon.[3] Instead he became assistant to another distinguished man, Arnold Thomas in Bristol.[4] His pacifism gave him a controversial begining and his actual experience of the pastorate was brief. The denomination honours and expects much from its college principals and Micklem became Chairman of the Congregational Union for the year 1944-5 and was soon at work in the Joint Conference of representatives of the Congregational Union of England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church in England appointed 'to consider the possibilities of organic union'. This reported in favour of such union to the assemblies of 1947 but it met with insufficient support from the churches.[5] A comparison of the Joint Conference Report (1947) and the Basis of Union (1972) shows that the foundations for the United Reformed Church were laid in those

1 Grant, Free Churchmanship, n.d. but c 1951; Davies, English Puritans, London 1948; Davies, Worship and Theology, Oxford and Princeton 1961-75.
2 Micklem, The Box and the Puppets, p.13
3 Clyde Binfield, So Down to Prayers, London 1977, p. 241
4 See Micklem, Arnold Thomas of Bristol, Collected Papers and Addresses with a Memoir by Nathaniel Micklem, Lond.1925
5 Tudur Jones, Congregationalism pp.432-3; CYB 1952, pp.98-9

earlier proposals. Of special interest here is the agreement in 1947 that Church Meetings be held at least four times a year and the recognition of wider councils which would have ministerial, non-coercive, authority.[1] In the British Weekly in 1951, this time in person, not anonymously, he felt most wanted union provided 'the responsibilities and privileges of the local congregation would be respected' but that Independents had still not quite attained 'the spiritual responsibility for one another'.[2] He had come to see that though the theory of Congregationalism and that of Presbyterianism sounded radically different, the practice of the two denominaions was remarkably similar.[3] His own brief experience in the early years of the United Church of Canada had also demonstrated to him that Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Methodists could become one church. The United Church was formed in 1925.[4] Micklem was Professor at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario 1927-31, the years also of his shift from liberalism.

It was Micklem who drafted the statement on Congregationalism for the Sixth International Congregational Council at Wellesley, Boston, (1949) which was later included in 'A Statement on Congregationalism made to the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches' in 1951.[5] Part of his achievement was

1 Joint Conference Report, London 1947. The 'Basis' of the United Reformed Church is now printed in the Manual

2 BW, April 26th 1951

3 BW, March 13th 1952

4 Micklem's pupil, Dr John Grant has written The Canadian Experience of Church Union, London 1967

5 R Newton Flew, editor, The Nature of the Church , London 1952, chapter VIII

in producing a statement which met with 'unusual acceptance and approval' not only from all the constituent unions but also from Albert Peel. It notes the connection between Congregational polity and political democracy. Democracy is government by discussion. In the Church the ultimate human authority is the whole fellowship. Locally members seek the mind of Christ in Church Meeting. Synods have the same authority as Church Meeting. Peel and others from Czechoslovakia and the United States who signed the report evidently agreed but the emphasises on government by discussion and the authority of synods are characteristic of Micklem. [1]

Before the Church of England formally adopted synodical government it invited the Free Churches to 'take episcopacy into their system'.[2] Micklem, who for many years had been active in the Friends of Reunion, was the Chairman for the Free Churches in the conversations with the Church of England which were reported in Church Relations in England (1950). He felt that the earlier appeal, Lambeth 1920, had met with 'a very sullen and unworthy response from Nonconformity' not least because many Free Churchmen had no positive convictions about organic union.[3] He himself had 'long abandoned any objection to episcopacy as such'[4] and he now (circa 1950) attempted to persuade others

1 Proceedings of the Sixth International Congregational Council, Boston/London 1949, pp. 35-39

2 Of special interest because written by Micklem's contemporary and fellow Congregationalist is the account in Norman Goodall, The Ecumenical Movement, Oxford 1961, p. 108f

3 Ilico in BW, March 15th 1956

4 Ilico in BW, June 30th 1955, 'Back to the Bishops'.

in a skillfully argued pamphlet, Congregationalism and Episcopacy. Unity discussions in England have a way of repeating themselves. Micklem often refers to the 1935 document, A Sketch of a United Church.[1] In the Congregationalist response to this document A.E.Garvie, E. Griffiths-Jones, J.D.Jones and Dr Sidney Berry had concluded : 'there is no ultimate incompatibility between episcopacy and Congregational principles'.[2] In 1982 the Assembly of the United Reformed Church by a more than two-thirds majority accepted under the Covenant Proposals that a united Church in this country at this time would be an episcopally ordered Church. The present writer in speaking for the motion quoted Nathaniel Micklem for support.[3]

The chief significance of Micklem in this study is that he combines a statesmanlike loyalty and responsibility for his own denomination with a catholic vision of the unity and mission of the Church in all places and through all ages. We may be many centuries from Calvin but at least once again we are talking of the reform of the whole Church, or as Micklem might wish to add, the renewal of all humanity.

1 For a summary of A Sketch of a United Church see BW, January 17th 1935, pp. 317-8, 325. People would have 'a fully effective choice' in the selection of a minister for a congregation. The Sketch also emphasised that the Church should have a conciliar, representative, self governing polity. Micklem's comments- see The Box and the Puppets, p.137; Congregationalism and Episcopacy, London N.D., p.13; Micklem, BW, March 13th 1952; Ilico BW, January 6th 1955.

2 Congregationalism and Episcopacy, p. 13

3 The Church Catholic, London 1935, p.60 :'As a matter of practical politics no Reunion is possible in England except upon a basis of episcopacy.'

Micklem's Liberal Democracy

Micklem was more the Liberal than the Democrat. In politics he sustained a life long loyalty to the Liberal Party. His father Nathaniel Micklem QC (1853-1954) and, as it was to transpire, his father in law Thomas Ball Silcock of Bath were both returned to Parliament in the Liberal landslide of 1906. At Oxford, Nath Micklem, like his father before him, was President of the Union - 'a club, which he says more especially then'modelled itself upon the House of Commons'. Not surprisingly, when he graduated he was approached with a view to entering Parliament. Instead he entered Mansfield.[1] His theological training , however, only confirmed the conviction he later expressed in The Theology of Politics that politics is a religious duty; that 'all political problems are at bottom theological'.[2] He became in later life a President of the Liberal Party and was attempting in the 1950's to revive its traditional Nonconformist support.[3]

He would more readily repudiate the title 'Democrat':

> 'If democracy is just a matter of counting heads without reference to what those heads contain, I for one would repudiate the name of democrat.' [4]

Liberalism on the other hand stood for:

> 'proportional equality, that is for an equality of consideration of each individual in accordance with his gifts and needs...personal responsibility in freedom.' [5]

1 The Box and the Puppets, pp. 28, 34, 40-1

2 The Theology of Politics, Oxford 1941, Preface p.x, xv

3 BW, April 12th 1956

4 Ilico, BW, May 12th 1955

5 Ilico, BW, June 2nd 1955

Democracy and freedom were not the same. In the Soviet 'democracies' people may have the vote but they do not have freedom.[1] In this country there are constant threats to freedom from party whips and the tyranny of majorities. A majority can be just as oppressive as a single tyrant.[2] Democracy had come to be 'government by the mass, by the great corporations, in the interests not of persons but of masses'.[3] He repeatedly challenges the wisdom of universal suffrage, of 'one man, one vote'. 'We can't go back on universal suffrage', he says with a sigh in The Idea of Liberal Democracy.[4] Ilico agreed. We trust parents with the vote but not to spend their own money on milk for their children. But 'we have , however, universal suffrage and must accept it'.[5] Universal suffrage he described as 'a new and somewhat dubious expedient'.[6] It is dubious because it rests on an abstract theory of 'mathematical equality... Jack is as good as his master, one man, one vote and the referendum'.[7] Universal suffrage is not universally practicable. It will not work in large parts of Africa and Asia or among the uneducated and only partially responsible.[8] He even sympathises with the view of Dr Salvador de Madariaga, a 'Liberal Heretic' he calls him, that one man, one vote does not work anywhere.[9] It is a product of Rousseau's

1 BW, July 24th 1958 2 BW, June 4th 1959

3 BW, June 2nd 1955

4 The Idea of Liberal Democracy, London 1957, pp. 85, 90

5 BW, April 13th 1961 6 BW, January 28th 1954

7 BW, June 2nd 1955 8 BW, October 20th 1960

9 BW, July 24th 1958 in a comment on Dr Salvador Madariaga's Democracy versus Liberty

illusions about human nature. Rousseau is the 'father of the flapper vote'.[1] To say that all men are equally the children of God 'belongs to the French Revolution, not the New Testament'.[2] The 'heresies' of Rousseau were also pointed out to British Weekly readers in one of Reinhold Niebuhr's articles and with a reference to Talmon's Totalitarian Democracy.[3]

Ilico obviously thought this subject important. In 1954 he wrote a series of articles: 'Towards a Liberal Political Philosophy'. The liberal democratic way lacks the fire of religious conviction because it has forgotten its essentially religious foundation. 'Without religion, our political philosophy will not work.'[4] These convictions are later expounded in The Idea of Liberal Democracy (1957):

> 'No man is more important than another in the eyes of God. Only on this ground have we a firm basis upon which to repudiate tyranny or the exploitation of the weak by the strong..
> The extreme weakness of the democratic and free world, as we call it today, lies in the loss of its religious basis and therefore of its high moral passion.. Democracy is at bottom a religious notion.'[5]

1 The Theology of Politics, Oxford 1941, p.50

2 The Idea of Liberal Democracy, London 1957, p.50
Cf. Hans Küng, Why Priests ? , ET (Fontana) London 1972, pp. 16f. for a less critical view of the French Revolution.

3 BW, February 10th, 1955. Niebuhr expands these points in The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness(1944) Scribners, New York 1972, pp. 45-6

4 BW, January 28th, March 4th, April 8th 1954.

5 The Idea of Liberal Democracy, pp. 51, 87

In Micklem's analysis Western democracy has four roots: -

1 Athenian democracy.

2 The humanism of the Renaissance.

3 The theocracy of the Independents.

4 The individualism of the Anabaptists and the Levellers. [1]

As a classical scholar he is familiar with the Greek experience. Thucydides had once commended Athenian democracy:

> 'we Athenians are able to judge at all events if we cannot originate, and instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling block in the way of action, we think it an indispensible preliminary to any wise action at all.' [2]

But the system became the prey of demagogues. The brilliant experiment collapsed and the great Greek philosophers ceased to regard democracy as the ideal form of government.[3] Micklem's comments are useful. They supply an historical context which those like Calvin and Bellarmine who quoted Plato and Aristotle may have failed to notice.

His view of Renaissance humanism, leading to Rousseau and the French Revolution, has already been discussed.

In his diagnosis of the weakness of modern democracy he tends to blame the Leveller and Anabaptist influence:

> 'as democracy has developed or degenerated among us it has become a form of soulless and selfish individualism'. [4]

In his prescription of a cure he looks towards Calvin:

> 'John Calvin was as little the democrat in the modern sense as Luther, and even the Independents (whose descendents are now called Congregationalists) are not strictly democratic in their Church polity. But one of the potent sources of democracy is to be found in a certain peculiar type of churchmanship'. [5]

1 The Idea of Liberal Democracy, pp. 65-8

2 ibid, p.61

3 ibid, p.61

4 ibid, p.63

5 The Theology of Politics, Oxford 1941, p. 48-9

Micklem is not prone to detailed footnotes but it is likely that he had read and absorbed Forsyth's Faith, Freedom and the Future. Forsyth had said that modern democracy has an Anabaptist mother but Calvin for its father.[1] Micklem says that via the English Independents 'Calvin is the father of representative government as Rousseau of the "flapper vote" '.[2] Ilico entitled one of his articles: 'John Calvin's America'. But he argued that Calvin's influence here was again indirect. America probably owed more to John Locke whose Calvinism was modified by his stay with the Remonstrants in the Netherlands.[3]

It is doubtful if he is fair to the Levellers in branding them with individualism. Since he wrote there has been much more research on their democracy and their religion.[4] There is a strong sense of corporate responsibility. There is also the conviction of direct inspiration of each believer. Lilburne, for example, has a strong anti-intellectual, anti-professional bias. It is to this that Micklem is right in seeing Calvin and the theocracy of the Independents as the necessary corrective. This too was Forsyth's view.[5]

1 Faith, Freedom and the Future (1912), London 1955, pp. 295-7

2 The Theology of Politics, p.50

3 BW, December 29th, 1955

4 See, for example: D.B.Robertson, The Religious Foundations of Leveller Democracy, New York 1951; J.C.Davis, 'The Levellers and Democracy', Past and Present Number 40, July 1968 pp. 174-80; J.C. Davis, 'The Levellers and Christianity', in Brian Manning, editor, Politics, Religion and the English Civil War, London 1973, pp 224f; Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down (1972) Penguin Books, London 1975.

5 P.T.Forsyth, The Church and the Sacraments (1917), London 1953, p. 15

In The Theology of Politics he states the contrast:

' "Democracy" of this Puritan type was essentially the rule of law and not of men' [1]. He agreed with the Quaker William Penn: 'men must be ruled by God or they will be ruled/tyrants'. [2] What Penn had prophesied in the seventeenth century Micklem witnessed in the twentieth. He visited Germany just before the War. He reported that National Socialists were departing from universally agreed 'Christian or democratic' conceptions :

> 'Right is what the people wills, and the will of the people is represented solely by the Party' . [3]

Hence the religious struggle in Germany was inevitable and ultimate. Again he might have noted Forsyth's horror of a democracy which will not acknowledge any authority outside itself. [4] Micklem's theological diagnosis of National Socialism was:

> 'pure Immanentism; it recognises no God outside, or other than, its own inner demands and wishes. The Church claims to speak to the nation in the name of the transcendent God, whose law is eternal, above all nations, and part of the structure of the universe'. [5]

As the son, and now the father, of a distinguished lawyer, Micklem returned to this theme after the War in his 'Wilde Lectures' at Oxford in 1949 and subsequently

1 The Theology of Politics, p.50

2 BW, December 29th 1955

3 National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church, Oxford 1939, p.30

4 Forsyth, The Principle of Authority (1913), London 1952, p.235; Positive Preaching (1907), London 1957, pp. 30-1.

5 National Socialism, p 61

published as Law and the Laws being the Marginal Comments of a Theologian. His question about 'the laws' is his question about democracy. Can a society remain stable, can law be secure without the basis of an ultimate authority in those religious principles from which it is in fact derived? He declares:

> 'There can be no durable reconstruction of the life of Europe except through a revival of reverence for God and reverence for law.' [1]

He quotes, as so often, one of his favourite political philosophers, Edmund Burke, that society is not just an arrangement entered into for the convenience of the present members but it is also itself to be the subject of men's reverence.[2] Forsyth, it will be remembered, was very anxious for the welfare of a society like a Congregational church that felt free by simple majority to change its fundamental constitution and the need to include in voting the past as well as future generations.[3] Micklem found this in Burke.

For Micklem democracy is not primarily a matter of majority decisions. 'Democracy as a political method is the settlement of questions by discussion.' [4] Discussion has to be free. But freedom is not simply the opportunity to speak one's mind. He quotes his Presbyterian contemporary, John Oman : 'Christian liberty is nothing else than a sense of higher obligation'.[5] It was this sense of higher obligation which makes it more

1 Law and the Laws, London and Edinburgh 1952, p. 21

2 Law and the Laws, p 102

3 Forsyth, Faith Freedom and the Future, p.226; The Principle of Authority, p. 246

4 BW, January 26th 1950

5 John Oman, Dialogues with God, p 76 quoted in Micklem, The Idea of Liberal Democracy, p. 42

accurate to describe the polity of the Independents, in State or Church, as theocratic. 'The Pilgrim Fathers were concerned with the sovreignty of God, not of the people.'[1] But the sense of obligation to God as sovreign makes us accept that 'no man is more important than another in the eyes of God'[2] and to adopt the method of government by discussion because we recognise the rights of others to be heard and to be considered. Micklem believes that the Christian doctrine of man 'must in the end lead to democratic institutions'.[3]

He also added: 'Man is by nature a spiritual being but not one about whom it is wise for statesmen to be too sentimental'.[4] Man is a child of God. He is also fallen man. The former permits him to be free, that latter makes some coercion necessary.[5] This tension is explored more fully by Reinhold Niebuhr in The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness. Like Micklem, Niebuhr sees that democracy is weakened to the point of destruction by a sentimental view of human nature. Micklem regarded Niebuhr as 'one of the outstanding religious teachers of our time'[6] though he did not think much of his style. He might, however, have usefully quoted Niebuhr's classic summary:

1 The Theology of Politics, p. 50
2 The Idea of Liberal Democracy, p. 51
3 BW, January 26th 1950
4 The Idea of Liberal Democracy, p. 52
5 ibid, pp. 52-4
6 BW, February 16th, 1950

> 'Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.' [1]

There is one further argument for liberal democracy that Micklem uses:

> 'civilised man has the natural right to share in his country's government on the ground that, when man has reached a certain stage of culture, he is unable fully to realise his capacities if he is cut off from this aspect of public and social life' . [2]

This is also expressed in terms of human dignity:

> 'Some share in the government belongs, as we suppose, to the dignity of human life' . [3]

Both Niebuhr and Micklem were theologians within the Reformed tradition though in Niebuhr's case there is also a link with Lutheranism. Was there something distinctive about the Reformed tradition that made it, more than others, pro-democratic ? Sometimes, perhaps in the rush to meet a weekly deadline, he generalises : 'there is an intimate and even essential connection between Protestantism and liberal democratic thought'.[4] His more considered view was that differences within Protestantism in the attitude to the State were fundamental. His pre-War visit to Germany brought this home. Baptists and Methodists in Germay were almost wholly uninterested in politics and 'German Evangelical Lutheranism might reasonably be regarded as the most unpolitical Church in Christendom' . [5]

1 Niebuhr, The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness (1944), 1972, p.xiii, Foreword 1944.

2 The Law and the Laws, 1952, p. 87

3 The Idea of Liberal Democracy, 1957, p.80

4 BW, January 28th 1954

5 National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church, Oxford 1939, pp. 51, 55 See also The Theology of Politics, p. 46 'It is for a theological reason that the political history of Switzerland, Holland, Great Britain and North America has been so different from that of Germany'. The 'theological reason' is John Calvin.
See also My Cherry Tree, London 1966, p. 115 Brought up in 'the Genevan theological tradition' it was his duty to take part in public life and seek a nation's righteousness.

Those who do get commended in this very thorough and judicious survey include Karl Barth, and the Pope for his Encyclical of March 14th 1937, read and heard in German congregations one Sunday and at once confiscated, which challenged the pseudo democratic, National Socialist view of Law that 'what helps the people is right' .[1]

The democratic influence of the Reformed tradition was emphasised in the statement Micklem drafted for the International Congregational Council. It is expounded also in an address delivered in 1936 on 'The Genevan Inheritance of Protestant Dissent' . Here he takes issue with Christopher Dawson, Roman Catholic, that the age of democracy is passing and that Christianity was compatible with other forms of government.

> 'I gravely question whether British Nonconformity can exist in loyalty to the great traditions of Geneva without creating democratic institutions or being at issue with the State in defence of civil liberties. '[2]

His own life and political activity was an example of this assertion. Others from the Reformed tradition who were similarly involved in the discussion and defence of democracy included Ernest Barker, brought up as a Congregationalist and later Anglican, and A.D.Lindsay, Presbyterian. Lindsay, Master of Balliol, he regarded as 'not unlike the Hebrew prophets '.[3] If Lindsay's emphasis on the importance of the

1 National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church, pp. 55, 172-3

2 The Place of Understanding and Other Papers, London 1963, p. 28. The address celebrated the four-hundredth anniversary of Calvin's Institution

3 The Box and the Puppets, p 91

small group for sustaining the vitality of democracy is more obvious in Peel, Barker's interpretation of democracy as government by discussion is also Micklem's.

Barker in his Reflections on Government (1942) maintains that democracy is not the worship of quantity. It is not primarily about majority rule. Rather it involves the qualities of 'the thinking and discussing mind' that can face alternative views of what is good. Majority rule is simply force overwhelming the minority. Barker's hope is that in the very process of discussion each person will feel he contributes to the decision. Discussion is ' a high faculty, and it requires a high temper of the mind '. Ilico described this book as ''a solemn and exalted plea for democracy' and particularly noticed the emphasis on the democratic process in 'the education of man and the development of human faculties'. [1]

Micklem's Aristocracy tempered by Democracy

Like Calvin,[2] but without being over conscious here of immitation, Micklem wavers between democracy and aristocracy, between government by general discussion and government by consent. The balance is sought in 'representative government'.

> 'In Church,as in State, the principle of representative government rather than the bare principle of "one man, one vote" (as if all men's judgments were of equal value on all subjects) is the true meaning of democracy.' [3]

1 Ernest. Barker, Reflections on Government (1942), Oxford 1967, pp. 4, 35-36, 45

2 Calvin, Institution 1559 IV/xx/8

3 BW, October 17th 1940

In the practice of the Independents the form of government was 'aristocratic'. But it had this democratic basis also :

> 'It was the duty and privilege of the whole body of the community to seek out those endowed with gifts of wisdom, prudence and organisation necessary for the ruler, to appoint them with all solemnity to their office, and having appointed them to obey them "in the Lord" '. [1]

The last phrase, though it is not expounded here by Micklem, means that the 'whole body of the community' retained a responsibility to assess what they were taught in the light of Scripture. [2]

In The Idea of Liberal Democracy Micklem defends aristocratic or representative democracy on the basis of Burke's famous speech to the electors of Bristol in 1774:

> 'Your representative owes you not his industry only but also his judgment; and he betrays you instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion' [3].

It is only on such an understanding that a representative can have an open debate with other representatives and government by decisions taken in the light of discussion be practised. But there are difficulties with Burke's view and it is interesting to compare Micklem's uncritical acceptance with Ernest Barker's astute observations on Burke of Bristol.

In 1774 Bristol offered the electors two Whig candidates.

1 The Theology of Politics, p.50

2 eg John Robinson's speech to the Pilgrim Fathers-'follow me no further than I follow Christ'.

3 The Idea of Liberal Democracy, p.68

One, Cruger, advocated short parliaments and said it was legitimate for the people to give instructions to their candidates. He would be the servant of the people, not their master.[1] Burke, on the other hand, according to Barker always looked on his electors with 'a mixture of professional pride and aristocratic aloofness'.[2] He had no sympathy for demands for the extension of the franchise and did not really believe in government by discussion:

> 'Burke hardly regarded himself as engaged in discussion with the people of Bristol, or the people of Bristol as engaged in discussion with him'.[3]

Barker as himself a child of Nonconformity found this hard to accept in Burke for Burke was educated at a Quaker school.[4] Burke never learned the Quaker idea of 'the sense of the meeting'[5] Barker has studied Burke's correspondence and also notes the significant facts that Burke did not live in Bristol, rarely visited his constituents, and in 1880 decided not to seek re-election either as delegate or representative for the people of Bristol. He is not after all the best monument to representative democracy.

The point has been worth exploring even though it might appear as a digression from the main subject of Church polity for Micklem at one point does use the Burke style of argument in explaining how Congregationalism should operate, especially

1 Ernest Barker, Burke of Bristol, Bristol 1931, p.76

2 ibid, pp. 51-2

3 ibid, p. 116

4 See also the Introduction by Conor Cruise O'Brien, editor, Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), Penguin Books, London 1969 pp. 24, 29. Much of the argument in the Reflections was against 'democratic' Dissenters who supported the French Revolution.

5 Barker, Burke of Bristol, p 118

in wider councils. 'Una Sancta cannot act by plebiscite'. If the Church is to act as one it can only do so through representatives. Congregationalists need not fear this for their historic testimony was that:

> 'the whole body of believers is qualified to recognise those to whom the Head of the Church has given the gifts needful for the Church's government and that the whole Church having ordained these rulers should obey them' . [1]

This is Micklem in 1935 at perhaps his most 'pontifical'. There is not even the important proviso of obedience 'in the Lord' and there is a generalisation about 'historic' or 'classic' Congregationalism that rightly offended the historian Albert Peel.[2] In the 1949 International Congregational Council statement which Micklem drafted and with which Peel agreed it is clearly stated that it is the Church Meeting which rules or rather:

> 'We believe that the instrument by which Christ rules in the local church is the Church Meeting, at which all the covenant members of the church seek together by prayer and discussion to discover the will of Christ and are guided into a common mind by the Holy Spirit'. [3]

Earlier, in Congregationalism and the Church Catholic (1943) an equal insistence on the necessity of officers-ministers, elders and deacons, and Church Meeting was made and it was also stressed that all authority in the Church is ministerial not magisterial.[4]

1 The Church Catholic, London 1935, pp. 37-8

2 Peel, Christian Freedom, London 1938, p. 42

3 R Newton Flew, The Nature of the Church , Chapter VIII or Proceedings of the Sixth International Congregational Council, Boston/London 1949, p.38

4 Congregationalism and the Church Catholic, pp.25-6
George B Caird (Mansfield 1940-43), Our Dialogue with Rome, Oxford 1967, p62 criticises Congregationalist use of this distinction. Ministerial sometimes means no authority and magisterial in its Latin origin is ambiguous. 'Magister' can be a schoolmaster or a dictator. Hence no objection to the former type of 'magisterial' authority.

Micklem believes in representative democracy because, as we have seen, he does not believe that all men's judgments are of equal value on all subjects. Nor does he believe in the 'counting of heads without reference to what those heads contain'. Moreover,

> 'The counting of heads may be a less religious way of ascertaining the divine will than the use of Urim and Thummin. It all depends upon the heads' [1].

The positive importance of his affirmations is that beyond the level of the local congregation the only practical democratic structure is that of representative government where representatives 'listen to every argument and make up their own minds'.[2] For this purpose Congregationalism needed to give to synods and wider councils the same authority as to the local Church Meeting. This point will be discussed further in the next section.

1 BW, October 17th 1940, p.22

2 BW, January 8th 1959

Micklem's Churchmanship and the importance of 'democratic' polity

Did Micklem hold his Congregational Churchmanship in trust for the whole Church ? Did he think that every Church should have the equivalents of Church Meeting or was Church Meeting, like democracy, not a catholic principle capable of universal application? What did he , the politician and the evangelist, think about the Church?

We may detect three phases in his thinking. In the first he can write about Jesus (The Galilean, 1920) or Faith and Reality (The Open Light, 1919), or even comment on 1 Corinthians (A First Century Letter, 1920) with very little reference to the Church,[1] and certainly no interest in disputes about Church order and the Church as institution. The Galilean proved itself a very popular little book and 'under God it has been a help to very many', as he noted thankfully in 1936,[2] but on the Church he comments: 'The Church must be less of an institution and much more a great brotherhood or family'.[3] The question of what sort of 'brotherhood' and who, if anyone, is to rule in it, was faced in God's Freemen (1922) which bore the subtitle, A Tract for the Times. This tract has a strong emphasis on the individual's direct access to God and despite Lambeth 1920 no interest in questions of Re-Union.[4]

1 Possibly too harsh a judgment. He notes for example that there is no reference - p. 75 - to a ministry of the Word and sacraments in the NT and this comment becomesa recurring theme in his later ecclesiastical discussions.

2 Micklem, What is the Faith ?, London 1936, p.12 'I could not write that book now, but I am thankful I wrote it then.'

3 The Galilean (1920) , 2nd edition, London 1921, p. 132

4 God's Freemen, London 1922, pp. 17-18. There is also a commendation of house churches and cottage meetings that could have been written by Peel.Micklem p. 94f

There is, however, an appeal to return to the Congregationalism of Browne, Barrow and Owen. He rebukes his contemporaries:

> 'modern Congregational churches with carelessly kept church rolls, ill-attended Church Meetings and general irresponsibility, tend to become democratic religious clubs and to bear the slenderest resemblance to the churches contemplated by Barrow, Browne and Owen'. [1]

But 'religious democracy' and 'the republic of fraternal souls' were part of the Churchmanship of Auguste Sabatier that Micklem in this liberal phase found so attractive.[2] He read The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit when he was still at school. It seemed, as he recalled some fifty years later, as though a new age of the Church had dawned. [3] Sabatier gave to those who had repudiated Calvinism a new basis for their Nonconformity.[4] And like others, he gained the impression from reading Harnack - or might it also have been Dale - that Church history down to the Reformation had been the sad story of corruption and decline.[5]

By 1927 Micklem is wrestling with the problem of authority in religion. His answer would do justice to Forsyth:

> 'Our authority is our personal consent to the faith of the Church as it comes to us through the Christian community and is for us corroborated in the Gospels'. [6]

His outlook becomes more ecumenical. He is experiencing the formative years of the United Church of Canada.[7] He contributes

1 God's Freemen, London 1922, p. 164

2 Sabatier (1839-1901), born of French Huguenot family, professor at the University of Paris. The Religions of Authority .., ET London 1904, p. 313

3 BW April 10th 1958 4 BW, November 9th 1944

5 What is the Faith? , London 1936, p. 11

6 CQ, 1927, pp 549f, Prof. Nathaniel Micklem, 'Congregationalism and Modernism', at the Oxford Conference, p. 553

7 Micklem is Professor of New Testament at Queen's University Ontario, 1927-31. The United Church of Canada -Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Methodist - was inaugurated in 1925.

to an ecumenical compendium, Mysterium Christi, edited by G.K.A. Bell and Adolf Deissmann,[1] and becomes sensitive to the criticisms of other Churchmen. His 'Modern Approach to Christology' was felt by those outside his own tradition as 'a serious blot upon the book'.[2]

The Church Catholic and the 'Mystery of Christ' are now closely bound together:

> 'The Christian experience of God in Christ is distinguishable but not separable from the experience of God in the Church.. He is the Head, they(the Christians) are the Body'.[3]

He is too careful with semantics ever to say 'the Church is the Body of Christ'. He rebukes T.F.Torrance for 'Roman Protestantism' for insisting that the phrase 'the Body of Christ' is 'a reality', not a metaphor.[4] Imperialism is a consequence of identifying Christ with the words and acts of the Church. He insists on saying that'The Church is a relationship between Christ and his People', not a 'superpersonal entity' existing almost independently of the people who compose it. That is 'Arianism in ecclesiology',[5] it is not the Catholic faith. His authority for asserting that the Church is bound to Christ as 'relatio', not as 'ens' or extension of the Incarnation is none other than Thomas Aquinas.[6] Nicklem at Mansfield lectures on Aquinas but is also a close student of Calvin. Calvin to him is a great Catholic and a very great theologian. He will say of himself, in a

1 Mysterium Christi, Christological Studies by British and and German Theologians, London 1930. pp 143-166

2 What is the Faith? (1936), p. 12

3 ibid, p. 129

4 BW, September 23rd 1954

5 ibid and BW, January 24th 1952

6 Law and the Laws (1952), p. 100 in a discussion of the State as 'Corporate Personality'. For a Protestant to lecture on Aquinas was then controversial; in 1967 Karl Barth lamented to Hans Küng that Catholics 'neglect too readily a serious study of Thomas Aquinas'! Karl Barth, Letters 1961-1968, ET Edinburgh 1981, p. 245 quoting a letter from Marcus Barth.

sort of literary discussion with Professor Norman Sykes (Anglican), that he is 'a Nonconformist in the Genevan tradition' and may quite properly be called 'a High Churchman'.[1] He can state, and in an article on Reunion, that :

> 'the offices of minister, elders and deacons in the Geneva tradition is a closer representation of the primitive Church order'

than the tradition of bishops, priests and deacons. That is Micklem in 1944.[2] Earlier, in 1940, he had quoted Dale:

> 'I anticipate a revival of orthodox Dissent with a great Churchmanship and a great theology'.

But he added that this Churchmanship would be willing to cast away Nonconformity as soon as a new religious settlement based on the catholicity of the Gospel is possible.[3] Micklem's Churchmanship is Catholic. It will be said of him at his memorial service that he knew Hooker better than most Anglicans and Aquinas better than most Romans. [4]

In his last years one may detect a certain tiredness with ecclesiastical issues. It has been good to be reminded of the Church but he wants ecclesiastic to 'keep quiet for a bit' and remember as the Orthodox teach that it is really all humanity that belongs to the Body of Christ.[5] He will not say as others do 'accept my doctrine and join my church'.[6] Nor will he preach 'not only Christ but the Church also with its recognised and

1 BW, March 15th 1956 2 BW, February 10th 1944, p.241
3 BW, January 11th 1940 4 By Revd Dr John Huxtable
5 BW, September 15th 1960 ; Faith and Reason, London 1963, p.186
6 The Abyss of Truth, London 1956 p.139

official ministries as part of "Christ" '[1], but only 'Jesus and the Resurrection'[2]. This is not because he thinks the Church unimportant. 'Every living theology', he once remarked,'springs out of and reflects the worship of the Church' [3]. It is in the end to a gathering of the Church round the Lord's table for the breaking of bread and a sharing of the Emmaus experience that he would invite his agnostic friends.[4]

From all these comments it will be foreseen that Micklem is not going to thrust the Church Meeting into a Lambeth Quadrilateral and expect everybody else to conform to his Nonconformity. But on the other hand he would remain a lifelong Dissenter because reluctantly, and on grounds that concern a 'democratic' polity, he could be no other.

He was divided 'though against his will'[5]from the Church of Rome. He sat at the feet of Aquinas, Bonaventura, Duns Scotus, Abelard and many more and encouraged others to do the same. He agreed with Bernard Manning that the Medieval Church is'the mother of us all'.[6]Rome after Trent had become a sect. Within a more catholic Church he could contemplate Congregationalism as an order with the relative autonomy that was given to the 'orders' within the Church of Rome. (This model for unity was once suggested by

1 A Religion for Agnostics, London 1965, p. 126

2 Faith and Reason, London 1963, p. 126

3 'The History of Christian Doctrine', in The Study of Theology prepared under the direction of Kenneth Kirk, London 1939, pp. 291-2

4 A Religion for Agnostics, p. 158

5 Dedication in National Socialism and the Roman Catholic Church, Oxford 1939; The Box and the Puppets, p111

6 BW, May 10th 1951 ; B.L.Manning, The People's Faith in the Time of Wyclif (1917), 2nd edition Cambridge 1975, p. 188

William Temple).[1] Among the orders within the Roman Catholic Church he felt 'greatly drawn' towards the Dominicans with whom he had close friendships both in Oxford and in Germany.[2] Was he partly attracted by the fact that the Constitution of the Dominican Order is a pioneering example of representative democracy? Ernest Barker had suggested, but not been able to prove, that English parliamentary government might owe something to the Dominicans.[3] More recently Geoffrey Nuttall, summarising the work of other scholars, finds in the 'independent congregations' of other medieval orders, in addition to that of St. Dominic, 'Congregationalism's ancestry'.[4] There were other less acceptable facets of Rome. It was with great 'distaste and unwillingness' that he wrote The Pope's Men (1953). Twenty years ago in Quebec he had seen Rome as blessing and curse - a curse because she was a menace to freedom. She 'kept the people ignorant, poor and superstitious'. She intervened directly in politics as a great 'political ecclesiastical engine', an 'elaborately organised international pressure group that takes its instructions from Rome'.[5] 'Let us not lose our heads in genial sentiments',[6] he said. As Rome remained, he could never have become a Roman Catholic.

1 BW, August 23rd 1945

2 The Box and the Puppets, p. 111

3 Ernest Barker, The Dominican Order and Convocation, Oxford 1913; In Age and Youth, Oxford 1953, p.54, Barker, once a Congregationalist in Dr Powicke's church, explains the meeting with a Dominican student that inspired this work. See also G.R.Galbraith, The Constitution of the Dominican Order, Manchester 1925; William A Hinnebusch, The History of the Dominican Order, New York 1965, Vol I, pp.170f explains balance of representative democracy with strong but not absolute authority - ie a mixed constitution.

4 G.F.Nuttall, Visible Saints, Oxford 1957, pp. 3-4 with reference to David Knowles, The Religious Orders of England, Vol. I, Cambridge 1948, p. 153; H.M.Colvin, The White Canons of England, Oxford 1951, pp. 11f. A further link is in the influence on Calvin of Dominicans at the University of Paris.

5 London 1953, pp. 6, 12, 16, 24. 6 BW, January 24th 1952

He could have been an Anglican if the Elizabethan Church had remained open to all who wished to be included;[1] if Anglicans would accept, as they had once done before 1662, and as William Temple said they should still do, the ministry of those ordained in the Reformed Churches;[2] or if the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been what it has often become in the twentieth,[3] for if so the ejectment would not have happened. But there were just too many 'if's' in such a statement to take him away from Nonconformity. It was not his choice:

> 'There are those who are born Nonconformists, that is to say are nonconforming by nature; there are others who had Nonconformity thrust upon them'.[4]

A whole line of Nathaniel Micklems before him had been churchwardens at Hurley. It was only with his grandfather that Micklems became Dissenters. To compound the offence, his grandfather had married a Dissenter. 'The family could not forgive him.'[5] There were many ties of friendship; great admiration for Archbishop William Temple;[6] deep respect for the faithful devoutness of Dom Gregory Dix - 'he began to speak to Jesus as a man speaks to his near friend. . It

1 BW, December 12th 1956

2 BW, March 16th 1944. John Keble conceded this point. Canon 55 of 1604, Micklem notes, recognised the Church of Scotland as a branch of the Holy Catholic Church. BW, November 23rd 1944, 'Reflections on the Passing of William Temple'.

3 BW, January 6th 1955 4 BW, April 24th 1952

5 The Box and the Puppets, London 1957, p. 14

6 The Box and the Puppets, pp. 128-9. In correspondence in BW, February 21st 1935 on the question of the historic episcopate and what exactly the phrase means, Temple, then Archbishop of York, professes a high regard for Ilico and 'an old standing friendship to him in his own person'

filled me with awe to overhear that conversation' . He adds: 'Reunion will come when disunity has become intolerable to us'.[1]

It was not easy to identify the barrier to union. Micklem and Temple had once issued a public statement. It is included in the Archbishop's Lent book that Micklem was asked to write, The Doctrine of our Redemption (1943):

> 'There is not, and there never has been, any controversy between the Church of England and Orthodox Dissent in respect of the articles of the Christian Faith'.[2]

Micklem recalls an occasion in 1949 when a group of strong Free Churchmen and strong Anglo Catholics sat down to discuss differences. Gordon Rupp drew up lists of mutual objections. These turned out to be identical. They knew there was 'a profound difference' between them, but 'at the end of our sessions we were utterly unable to define that point'.[3]

With Gregory Dix and other contributors to The Apostolic Ministry (1946) there was a radically different method of approach as can be seen by comparing that work with T.W.Manson's (Presbyterian) response, The Church's Ministry(1948).[4] But where The Apostolic Ministry contrasted a ministry'from above' via the episcopate and a ministry 'from below' from the congregation Micklem replied:

1 The Box and the Puppets, p.139

2 The Doctrine of our Redemption, London 1943, Introduction by William Temple, reprinted 1948 p. v ; BW, August 23rd 1945 refers to this as a joint statement.

3 The Box and the Puppets, p.139

4 The Apostolic Ministry, prepared under the direction of Kenneth Kirk, Bishop of Oxford, London 1946. There is a reply to Manson and a summary of subsequent debates in the 1957 edition, Foreword by A.M.Farrer. See also T.W.Manson Ministry and Priesthood: Christ's and Ours, London 1958 Micklem makes a brief comment on Kirk in My Cherry Tree. London 1966, p 46 and contrasts the views expressed therein with those of Hooker.

> 'Let us agree, however, that the ministry called of God, is God's gift to the Church by the Holy Spirit, not a mere delegation of Church authority from men' [1]

Discussions of the validity of ministry and sacfaments he found almost 'blasphemous' and could see how ridiculous it was that Canon Lacey's zeal for apostolic order should lead him to describe St Paul's conversion and apostolic calling 'a very dangerous exception'.[2] Micklem would say we must have rules but we must not expect the Holy Spirit to keep <u>our</u> rules.[3] It is not too difficult for a later Nonconformist to understand why Micklem once remarked :

> 'Anglicanism is the most exasperating Church in Christendom.... The Church of England is by law established and as yet not fully by grace reformed'.[4]

The reforms he would strongly encourage would not require total disestablishment or the abolition of episcopacy or even the abandonment of a parish system in favour of the more accurately defined membership of a gathered church. On disestablishment he was, he said in 1951, 'no longer in a hurry' :

> 'Let temporal powers dissociate
> Themselves from nuptials with the Church;
> And ghostly powers divorce the State
> And leave it strictly in the lurch.
> 'Twill then be matter for research-
> Let learned casuists decide-
> Which suffers more, or Church or State,
> By mutual pact of suicide' . [5]

1 <u>BW</u>, January 16th 1947 2 <u>BW</u>, March 1st 1956 (John Whale)

3 <u>BW</u>, April 15th 1954 4 <u>BW</u>, February 12th 1942, p.217

5 <u>BW</u>, September 20th 1951; 'On the total Separation of Church and State' in <u>A Gallimaufry</u>, London 1955, p.51

One reason for not being in a hurry was that a disestablished Church of England would probably be a clerically dominated Church. Establishment and Parliamentary control although 'worse than an anomaly' did give the laity 'some not wholly ineffective voice in church affairs'.[1] Secondly, he recognised that 'self government, whether in Church or State, is not learnt in a generation'.[2] In this he agreed with Bernard Manning who had been asked to give evidence to the Archbishop's Commission on the Relations between Church and State in 1931 'from a Free Church Point of View'. Manning had said 'I suppose that at bottom we do not think episcopalians are yet truly fit for self government and liberty'.[3] Micklem summarised Manning's report :'The Church of England was not yet fit for freedom and could not be trusted to be free' .[4]

Nor could Anglican episcopalians be trusted with the appointment of their own bishops. All the talk about 'Catholic Order' was 'so much ballyhoo'. Churchill and not the Church appointed Fisher.[5] 'Catholic practice'and 'serious Churchmanship' requires that the Church elect and appoint its own officers .[6]

> 'We need say no more than that St Cyprian would not have recognised the valid episcopacy of any bishop elected on these terms, as he would not have recognised the valid episcopacy of any bishop now upon the bench. The early Christian and catholic method of electing bishops has been preserved by the non-episcopal Churches, and by them alone. A bishop must be elected by his flock, and his election must be confirmed by neighbouring bishops as representing the whole Church catholic.' [7]

1 BW, September 20th 1951 2 BW, May 22nd 1952

3 Bernard L.Manning in Essays in Orthodox Dissent, 1939, p.209

4 BW, September 20th 1951

5 BW, January 11th 1945, p.213

6 BW, January 11th 1945, p.213

7 BW, July 17th 1941, p.141 in response to changes in appointment of bishops suggested by Prof N.P.Williams.

This is, incidentally, another example of how Cyprian, who is sometimes blamed by Nonconformists for the development of an hierarchical Church, can also be quoted as the defender of the proper rights of the laity.[1] If properly elected, Micklem could respond to Fisher's appeal and 'take episcopacy into his system' but in such tasks as 'the preservation of sound doctrine' he would insist that bishops be joined by ministers, deacons and Church-members. He could not agree with Anglicans who 'regard bishops as peculiarly entrusted with the preservation of sound doctrine'. There had after all 'been far too many heretical bishops for us to take that view'.[2] I am not sure that Micklem has correctly understood Anglicanism at this point - although the same sort of disquiet would feature again in the 1980's Covenant debates. Certainly in 1902 and again in 1953 the Church of England was seeking ways of joining laity and clergy together in what the 1953 Report calls 'the synodical government of the Church'.[3] Micklem lived to see synodical government formally inaugurated. Back in 1919 Parochial Church Councils had been introduced. He commented in 1941: 'It is perhaps not generally realised how revolutionary a change in the parochial system was thus effected'.[4] Unlike some Dissenters he appreciated the missionary potential of the parish structure.[5] He could agree and disagree with Anglicans as a fellow Churchman

1 See my chapter II, 'Reformation Debates'

2 Congregationalism and Episcopacy, London c 1950 pp. 16-17 Ilico noted the cooperation of bishops, presbyters and representative laity commended in Norman Sykes, Old Priest New Presbyter (1956), BW, March 22nd 1956

3 Synodical Government in the Church of England, CIO, London 1966, pp. 9-10 (sometimes called the Hodson Report after its chairman, The Rt. Hon. Lord Hodson.)

4 BW, August 28th 1941, p.193

5 BW, May 30th 1957, 'The Congregational Way and the Parish' in a critical comment on G.F.Nuttall, Visible Saints, The Congregational Way 1640-1660, Oxford 1957

without any feeling of Nonconformist inferiority. 'The Anglican claim is often said to be typically English but it is not more typically English than Nonconformity.' [1]

He could not easily have been a Presbyterian. His objection is firmly stated in Congregationalism and the Church Catholic (1943):

> 'Our objection to Presbyterianism is to the claim of Presbytery (however rarely exercised) to override by law the conviction of the local congregation' . [2]

He came to see that for all their differences in theory the workings of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism were very similar. This was one factor that made him an advocate of the union of the two Reformed Churches.(Another was his experience in the United Church of Canada which embraced Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Methodists; a third must have been his admiration for Presbyterians like John Oman and T.W.Manson[3])
He made the discovery of 'a surprising fact' that Presbyterianism was more democratic than Congregationalism. He was referring in particular to its structure beyond the local congregation and its more responsible treatment of its denominational officials.[4] His earlier qualms about the exercise of authority over a local congregation were also resolved. He came to see that there were occasions when action might have to be taken over a local church, action that had to be 'magisterial' and not just 'ministerial'. The matter was in theory resolved in the

1 BW, December 20th 1956

2 Congregationalism and the Church Catholic, p. 43

3 Manson taught at Mansfield while Micklem was Principal. 'He was to us a pillar apostle in every matter except only that his Presbyterian status prevented him from being much help to me with the wild men of the Congregational persuasion.' The Box and the Puppets, p.81

4 BW, October 17th 1940, p.22

Joint Conference Report (1947) which Micklem helped to write. This rather tentative exploration of possible union agreed that authority should be ministerial. It noted that whereas in the last resort Presbytery or Assembly could impose its will on a local congregation, Congregationalists could only withdraw recognition.[1] But Ilico in his British Weekly comment welcomed the fact that the proposals could bring greater equality into Congregationalism if all churches, whether aided or unaided, were treated alike. He also stated the conviction that:

> 'a County Union or a Presbytery is not an external authority in respect of the local congregation, but rather an extension of the local fellowship and of one nature with it'. [2]

Nothing came of this Report, apart from a new Covenant relationship, until the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972. The theory of this Church is that of conciliar authority exercised always in mutual consultation with the parties involved. The Church envisaged in 1947 was said Ilico 'more democratic than present Congregational practice'.[3] Nath Micklem died a member of this Church that he had helped to create.

In attempting some assessment of the United Church of Canada - and it was argued in the discussions with Presbyterians that Congregationalists should weigh their experience in union Churches elsewhere- Micklem asked, 'Is this Church Scriptural ?'

1 Joint Conference Report, London 1947 p.8

2 BW, May 29th 1947 .

3 BW, May 29th 1947. The Covenant relationship is reported in BW May 17th 1951. The two Churches said they shared a common inheritance in 'the Reformed tradition'. They covenanted to take counsel together on all matters of common concern. See also report of earlier debate agreeing to covenant in CYB, 1950, p. 96 Report on Assembly May 11th 1949. The constitution of the United Reformed Church is set out in The Manual of the United Reformed Church

to which he answered that it is not unScriptural and that the New Testament did not provide a blue print for all places and all ages. Secondly, he asked 'is it efficient?' and answered:

> 'here I think the answer would be that it enjoys the slow and ultimately sure efficiency of democratic ways and shows the disadvantages of political methods which refuse to hand over all control and power to the most effective business man'.

In sum, it provided a structure in which Christ could rule in his Church and with some provision to prevent any person or group from usurping his Kingly rule.[1] The Church certainly conforms to Micklem's ideal of representative democracy rather than that of direct democracy in that the functions of the Church Meeting in the United Church are not so extensive as in a Congregational Church. 'The pattern of the Basis(of the United Church of Canada) undoubtedly leans to the connexional side', says its historian John Webster Grant.[2]

Thus in evaluating other Churches democracy in Church government is one important criterion. It must not, however, be pressed to the exclusion of other weighty considerations:

> 'To my own denomination, as I believe, has been given a true insight into the privileges and responsibilities of the local congregation. This may be called a principle which we hold in trust for the whole Church catholic; but it is not, and cannot be, the sole principle of churchmanship, and taken by itself it may easily become a principle of schism'.[3]

1 BW, September 30th 1943, p.315

2 J W Grant, The Canadian Experience of Church Union, London 1967, p. 38. Opposition to the union did not follow expected denominational lines. The main dissenters were Presbyterians in favour of local union schemes. Grant's study is also of interest because of his consideration of the moral dilemma poised in union schemes by majority voting- p.48 'never in the history of negotiations for Church union has the question of the moral, as distinct from the legal, right of a majority been more acutely raised'-from RuthRouse and S.C.Neill, A History of the Ecumenical Movement, London 1954, p.456f

3 The Box and the Puppets, p.137

Micklem's statement of what Congregationalism is, which, by 'a happy paradox', was presented to the International Congregational Council by Albert Peel, was intended for an ecumenical audience. It bore the title: 'Congregationalism in itself, in its significance for the Universal Church, and for the Political and Economic Life of the World'. It declared, as we have heard Micklem proclaim before, that: 'The purpose of Church polity is that Christ, and Christ alone, may rule in His Church'. [1] This principle is spelt out in more but compact detail in Faith and Reason (1963):

> 'We may with some assurance lay down the principle that that church order will be best and will be divinely intended whereby Christ in any age can most surely rule the Church by his Spirit, and the Church be best equipped to fulfil its function. It may be argued that the papacy or"the historic episcopate" or the Presbyterian order or the Congregational freedom, or some combination of these, will best fulfil the conditions of "Christ's kingly government in his house" and best equip the Church for its service to mankind'. [2]

In this conviction that Congregationalism, and Reformed Churchmanship, has a contribution to make to the whole Church but no monopoly of catholicity, Micklem follows Forsyth. But what, in his view, was Congregationalism's distinctive contribution?

1 R.Newton Flew, editor, The Nature of the Church, London 1952, p. 183f. ; The Box and the Puppets, p. 135

2 Faith and Reason, London 1963, p. 175

In an article published in 1953, the year of his retirement, the Principal of Mansfield said that Congregationalism held in trust for the whole Church two 'catholic principles':

1, 'The principle of the Church Meeting, namely that Christ rules in the local congregation by bringing the members gathered in His Name to a common mind in the Holy Spirit'

2 'That the authority of Assemblies, Synods, County Unions is like the authority of Church Meeting; it is spiritual not legal; ministerial not magisterial' [1]

Ten years before this, in Congregationalism and the Church Catholic (1943) he quoted with approval the statement by Daniel Jenkins already refered to in his The Nature of Catholicity (1942):

> 'where a Church possesses Scripture, Proclamation, the Sacraments, the Apostolic Ministry and, as we shall go on to show, the Church Meeting, it is equipped under God for God's service, for manifesting Jesus Christ to the world and walking in His way' [2]

Jenkins went on to commend the Church Meeting as 'perhaps the greatest contribution of the Congregational Churches to the fullness of the Church's catholicity'.[3] Micklem agrees with this emphasis on fullness rather than insisting that all Churches must have a Church Meeting:

> 'Like democracy, it presupposes a considerable background of culture and education. Therefore, while we may claim that no polity is justified which is at variance with the principles laid down in the New Testament, we cannot claim that only the Congregational order...is acceptible in the sight of God'. [4]

1 BW, May 14th 1953, p.1, 'Is there a future for Congregationalism?' by Nathaniel Micklem

2 Micklem, Congregationalism and the Church Catholic, London 1943, p. 28 ; Daniel T Jenkins, The Nature of Catholicity, London 1942, p.105. Jenkins acknowledges Micklem's help.

3 Jenkins, ibid, p.110

4 Congregationalism and the Church Catholic, p. 24

Congregationalism does not work well in frontier situations, where new churches are being planted, or among uneducated people-[1] a statement which may appear to be true from observation of where and why Congregational churches flourish in this country, but one that, as was seen in the last chapter, was challenged by Peel and Roland Allen and all who believed that anywhere and from an early stage new churches should be self-governing.

Micklem is especially anxious that the Church should never be defined as consisting of those, and only those, who are capable of participating in Church Meeting. Just as Calvin 'violently repudiated the doctrine of the Cathari, who said that only the pure could be members of the Church',[2] so Micklem violently sought to demolish the doctrine of Albert Peel. What he most objects to in Peel's Inevitable Congregationalism (1937) is the description of church members as those 'entirely consecrated to Christ', or the 'keen' people, the 'two or three' 'devoted' and 'heroic':

> 'The principle that the true Church consists of the entirely consecrated is the (heretical) assertion that the catholic and apostolic Church consists only of the righteous' [3]

He rejects the assumption, egalitarian but in effect exclusive, that anyone who is fit to be a church member is also qualified to be a deacon.[4] Is this because Peel has a high view of membership

1 Congregationalism and the Church Catholic, p.24

2 Micklem, What is the Faith?, London 1936, p.212
Calvin, Institution IV/1/13 refers to the Cathari and the Donatists, and in his day, some of the Anabaptists.

3 Micklem, Congregationalism Today, London 1937, pp. 10,21

4 Congregationalism Today, p.11

or because he understates the leadership function of a deacon ? Micklem thinks the latter.[1] Micklem wants to say that the Church consists of 'the forgiven', 'all those who are within the the covenant of Grace',[2] or 'believers and their children'. 'As a practical, but not as a final or divinely guaranteed, rule the Church consists of the baptised.' Or again, of people who have not fallen away from their baptism.[3] On any of these definitions Micklem is aware of the significance for church polity of what he is saying:

> 'It will, I am sure, be said that, in abandoning the idea of the Church as consisting of the elite, I have by implication repudiated the conception of a Congregational Church and made havoc of its claim to be self governing'.[4]

His defence is to to make use of the concept of 'fullness' that later was used by Jenkins and to see a Congregational Church as an Order within the Church catholic, rather like one of the monastic movements:

> 'a Congregational Church (or a Methodist denomination) is a close fellowship of those who are separated by God for the disciplined life of a fellowship at a higher level than the whole Church has attained'.[5]

If it is thought Micklem's advanced monasticism is not totally different from Peel's 'keen' people 'entirely consecrated to Christ' it should be noted Micklem himself had admitted

1 Congregationalism Today, p.13, criticism of the idea that deacons are 'simply an executive committee'.

2 Congregationalism Today, p.21

3 What is the Faith?, p.216

4 ibid, p.216

5 ibid, p.217

in launching his reply to Peel: 'In the main I accept these ideas'. What he objected to was the dated -did he not think also Pelagian- way of stating things.[1]

The same booklet also expresses some of Micklem's most virulent attacks on the identification of Congregationalism with democracy. At the same time he still says'"the democratic principle"-if that be the right word- is, indeed, essential to Congregationalism'.[2] 'Democracy' is not the right word if it means 'one man one vote' and the 'remission of all issues to the whole membership'.[3] If 'democracy' means plebiscites, Micklem, like Forsyth, will have none of it.[4] If it means that the members are under no obligation to listen to their ministers or indeed can dispense with ministers and sacraments altogether, this again, like a resounding echo of Forsyth, may be secular democracy but it is not Congregational Churchmanship.[5] He is, as we have seen, happier with the practice of representative democracy.[6] But he does say there is a fundamental equality in that all belong to the royal priesthood though they have different tasks within it;[7] and that all members have 'an inalienable right to judge whether they are being ruled by the "Word of God", the living Christ'.[8] Theology, not politics, must shape the polity of the Church.

1 Congregationalism Today, p 5
2 ibid, p.14
3 What is the Faith?, p.218
4 Congregationalism Today, p10
5 ibid, p.13
6 ibid, p.10
7 ibid, p.11
8 ibid, p.14

Many others were anxious that Congregationalists should think theologically about the Church Meeting. Some, like John Huxtable and Hubert Cunliffe-Jones were Mansfield men, though only the first could be regarded as a Micklem-man.[1] Others, like Harry Francis Lovell Cocks, had signed the 1939 letter which summoned 'The Ministers of Christ's Holy Gospel' to a renewal of their Reformed Churchmanship.[2] Dr Lovell Cocks sensed a new interest in our Church Meetings among Continental theologians after their experience of Nazism. Under the tyranny of a totalitarian state the Church Meeting could be 'the most significant gathering in the world'. Because its decisions committed the members to action that could be dangerous and costly there would be no time for trivialities but 'much prayer and earnest waiting on God'.[3] His profession of faith: 'It is preeminently the Church Meeting that proclaims the creed that Jesus Christ is Lord' was quoted in a denominational leaflet on The Church Meeting (1952). It also repeated his assertion that 'our Church Meeting is not a democracy'.[4] John Huxtable said the same and often. 'We have talked as if our churches were democratic institutions.' We must get back to genuine waiting on God and be able to say 'it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us'.[5] He quotes Dale:

1 Hubert Cunliffe-Jones left Mansfield in 1933. John Huxtable in 1937. Micklem was Vice-Principal from 1931, Principal 1932-53.

2 The Box and the Puppets pp.93-9

3 H.F.Lovell Cocks, The Church in the Atomic Age, London 1949, pp.20-21

4 The Church Meeting, CUEW Church and Kingdom pamphlet. London 1952, p.7

5 John Huxtable, The Tradition of our Fathers, Address from the Chair of the Congregational Union, London 1962, pp. 20-22

'To be at Church Meeting...' - without doubt the classic statement of the Congregationalist ideal . In 1943, in the same book, he said it was misleading to think of Church Meetings as democratic, 'it is Christ who rules, not the majority'.[1] More positively, Hubert Cunliffe-Jones said: 'it is through the working of the Holy Spirit that the Church Meeting is actively a means of grace'.[2] 'A means of grace' is how Manning,Micklem, Whale, Sydney Cave, J.D.Jones and others had described Church Meeting in the 1939 letter that Routley regarded as so historic.[3] Jenkins also saw the Church Meeting as a'means of grace'[4]

The denials of democracy were understandable but not perhaps very helpful. Democracy was, as can be seen, defined and then dismissed as majority rule usurping the sovreignty of Christ. R.S.Franks, father of the present Lord Franks, protested:

> 'Not even a single independent church can do without some practical method of maintaining its unity, which must be either monarchic, oligarchic or democratic' .

This learned theologian them recalled a useful distinction made by Ritschl. From the religious view the Church is governed by God but from an ethical view it is managed by men. We have to use human means and pray to God for guidance. Democracy was one of those means:

> 'there may be a dispute as to what polity best suits the genius of Christianity, but there is no warrant for rejecting democracy simply because it is human' .[5]

1 W.John Huxtable, The Ministry, London 1943, pp. 47,55-6

2 Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, The Holy Spirit, London 1943

3 Eric Routley, The Story of Congregationalism, London 1961, pp. 94, 164, Appendix where the letter is printed and the names of the signatories given.

4 Daniel T Jenkins , The Nature of Catholicity, London 1942 p.105 associates Church Meeting with Scripture,Proclamation, Sacraments and Ministry; The Church Meeting and Democracy, London 1944, p.24 sees Church Meeting as an extension of the Communion.

5 CQ, 1942, pp. 362f in a review comment on Daniel T Jenkins, The Nature of Catholicity

To Micklem even the apparently human devices of laws and democratic government had no ultimate basis except in religion. They were, like Church Meeting, 'faith structures'

Micklem and Church Democracy in Practice

Beyond the level of the local church Congregationalism had no real faith structure: 'we have no religious or theological principle to guide our denominational life'. 'Our denomination has an expediency structure'.[1] As one who was in a better position to lead the denomination(through his writings and position as a college principal) rather than a local church, Micklem's practical influence should be looked for first in the councils and assemblies of his Church.

His convictions are forcefully urged in Congregationalism and the Church Catholic(1943).The office of moderator is one of expediency, it has not been thought through theologically. How this could be done in more 'catholic' terminology is explored in Congregationalism and Episcopacy.[2] Of more immediate relevance to our subject are his comments on Assemblies:

> 'Serious debate and waiting on God there cannot be..
> 'The Congregationalists have no organ through which they expect to hear the voice of the Spirit as they do in Church Meeting'
> 'Has Christ no organ beyond the local Church Meeting for the government of his house? ' . [3]

Others, among them Albert Peel, had expressed the same disquiet but to Micklem may go some of the credit for reforms that led to

1 Micklem, Congregationalism and the Church Catholic, London 1943, p.30

2 Also of interest here is the question raised by C.H.Dodd as to who were the equivalents in Congregationalism to the apostolic ministry of a man like Paul. Is it enough to say the Church is the successor of the apostles? See also Micklem's Arnold Thomas of Bristol, 1925 and Thomas' proposals for democratically elected bishops,p.74

3 Congregationalism and the Church Catholic, pp. 32-4

the change from a Congregational Union to the Congregational Church in 1966, and the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972. In the latter certainly Assembly can decide for the Church. In the Constitution of the former it is said:

> 'From the time of their formation Congregational churches have had fellowship with one another.. they have found guidance similar to that known in the local church meeting' [1]

Much the same had been said at the Seventh International Congregational Council, meeting in St Andrews in 1953 and not all had agreed. .Geoffrey Nuttall said the same Spirit that guides a local church guides a council but a council lacks the permanence and intimacy of a Meeting of the local congregation.[2] He said still more thought had to be given to the matter, which was indeed what Micklem had been urging in 1943.

At the local level Micklem's student, Daniel Jenkins, aimed to be practical in many of his suggestions in The Church Meeting and Democracy (1944) although one critic said 'it smacks in places of the study rather than of practical experience'.[3] Church Meeting is an extension of the Communion. The minister should robe for it and be no mere chairman but be there to serve the Word of God.[4] Political methods of scoring points or letting people think they are having their way are eschewed. To vote is to admit failure and should lead to confession.[5] Because of its link with worship Church Meeting

1 Constitution of the Congregational Church in England and Wales, Adopted May 1966, Preamble, 5. Printed in CYB 1967 and subsequently.

2 CQ, 1953, pp. 325-8

3 The Presbyter, Vol. 4, No. 1, February 1946. The Presbyter was at that time edited by Jenkins as 'A Journal of Catholic and Confessional Churchmanship'.

4 The Church Meeting and Democracy, London 1944, pp.27-9,34

5 ibid, pp. 32-4

could be held after the service on a Sunday and in the sanctuary. Whether such a procedure might restrict and inhibit discussion is not seriously considered. Some of these ideas are repeated in his better known book, Congregationalism: A Restatement(1954) [1]

The link between worship and Church Meeting and the Church Meeting as a means of grace is reverently commended in The Rodborough Bede Book.[2] Before coming to a decision the members are urged to pray one of the special prayers offered: that they may 'speak what Thou dost declare, and deliver only Thy decrees'. Church Meetings were held every week -the usual pattern is once a month-'over seventy (members) the last three weeks' it was noted in 1932. One cannot claim the Micklem influence for this but there are signs of the Micklem approval. C.E.Watson ministered for thirty-three years at the Rodborough Tabernacle. He sometimes stayed in Mansfield and Micklem preached for him at the Rededication service in 1933.[3]

Eric Routley, a Micklem man and later tutor in Church History at Mansfield,gives some very practical comments in his Congregationalism and Unity(1962). Congregationalism stands for 'government through friendship'.[4] Decisions are not reached through voting but rather a proposal is modified again and again in the light of the accumulating wisdom of the members. Then

1 Daniel T.Jenkins, Congregationalism: A Restatement, London 1954, pp. 96-100

2 The Rodborough Bede Book, reprinted London 1943

3 A.T.S.James, A Cotswold Minister, a Memoir of C.E.Watson, London 1944; Ilico in BW September 9th 1954

4 E.R.Routley, Congregationalists and Unity, London 1962 p.10

all it is hoped will say of the final decision: 'This is right and nearer to the will of God than that which by myself I should have decided'. 'Government by friendship' became more difficult in a mobile society and in larger churches. Routley noted:'The larger the membership, the smaller the number of people whose influence in the government of the Church is decisive'.[1] Such basic observations of actual practice are surprisingly rare.

It is not presumed that if Nath Micklem had enjoyed more pastoral experience in local churches he would necessarily have expressed identical judgments. Just that Jenkins, Routley and Watson do express the Micklem concern to be Churchmen in Church Meetings.

Who influenced Nath. Micklem ?

In his last book, The Religion of a Sceptic(1976), Nath Micklem says the three teachers who have most influenced his thought have been Plato, Thomas Aquinas and John Oman.[2] F.R.Barry once described him as 'Socrates in clerical dress'.[3] Micklem felt he belonged to what Dean Inge had called 'the Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought' [4]

In Churchmanship he has been called a Genevan and, as was noted, he accepted that title. Not over zealous with footnotes, his debt to Calvin is most obvious in his own contribution to Christian Worship (1936).Calvin he regards as the preeminent exponent of the theology of Protestantism.[5]Forsyth revered Calvin

1 E.R.Routley, Congregationalists and Unity, p.25-27

2 The Religion of a Sceptic, Acton Society Trust, London 1976, pp. 53-4

3 EW, December 5th 1940, p.95

4 Religion of a Sceptic p.54

5 What is the Faith?,1936 p.40

and Micklem had great respect for Forsyth, well expressed in his remark: 'I once looked upon him at close quarters, as I once looked upon Mr Gladstone'.[1] He remained a life long Liberal in politics and never repudiated the good things in his liberal-theological past. It is a sign of his enduring radicalism[2] and personal catholicity that he could commend two such different theologians as Forsyth and John Oman. Let the last word be from 'my revered mentor' [3] John Oman:

> 'Far more is needed than a democratic church organisation..... Christianity is not individualism tempered by the ballot box. Christ himself says things little flattering to majorities. A unanimous vote leaves it still possible that God's verdict is on the other side, while the condition of an oppressed minority is apparently to continue to be the lot of his real disciples' [4]

1 BW, December 18th 1952 Ilico on 'Peter Taylor Forsyth'

2 BW, October 18th 1956 'A Retrospect' on twenty-five years of his Ilico columns- 'I think that as I grow older and perhaps wiser I grow more revolutionary in respect of matters ecclesiastical as well as theological'. See also Alex Whitehouse's tribute in Christian Confidence, edited by Roger Tomes, London 1970, p.15 : Nathaniel Micklem.. made pleas for greater radicalism (on the Commission that produced the Congregational Declaration of Faith 1964, 1967). Christian Confidence was a tribute by former pupils on Micklem's eightieth birthday.

3 Faith and Reason, London, 1963 p 15

4 John Oman, The Church and the Divine Order, London 1911, p.318

ECUMENICAL DEBATE: ADJOURNED

The first main chapter was about the Reformation debate within the Western Church about how the Church should be governed. This chapter puts the case for democracy in Church government before an ecumenical council. Speakers from traditions other than the Reformed are just beginning to reply when the debate is adjourned.

The case for democracy in Church government - a Report

There is no single definition of democracy and a general appreciation that the term is ambiguous. What is intended is a short-hand description, using a familiar political term, of a form of government in which all the recognised members of the Church have a share in its government. At the local level all members can participate directly; in wider councils they act through representatives. Micklem says that representative government is the true meaning of democracy, Calvin's preference was for aristocracy modified by popular rule. Occasionally it will be said (Robert Browne, John Angell James) that the 'voice of the people is the voice of God' but it is always presumed that the people are the people of God and guided by Him. An unanimous decision is often taken as evidence of this but there are reservations about the assumption that a majority is necessarily more right than a minority(Samuel Davidson, Forsyth, Oman.) Micklem prefers to say the democracy means government by discussion. So does Ernest Barker. Eric Routley speaks of 'government through friendship'.

None of the spokesman would insist that all churches must be democratically ordered under Christ, but they would expect to hear good reasons why, in some circumstances, the people of the Church should not participate in its government. Forsyth and Micklem although they are quite prepared to accept some form of constitutional episcopacy object to making a particular Church polity a condition of Church union. Christ, says Forsyth, was not a constitution maker. Micklem, Manning, Whale, Jenkins and others testified that Church Meeting was a 'means of grace'. They would not make it a law.

They all believed that polity was important. If they did not they would not have remained Congregationalists for their main quarrel with other Churches, even with Rome, concerned Church government. But they all agreed there were more vital aspects of the faith. To Peel this was Christian Freedom, to Dale the Communion of Saints, to Forsyth the salvation of the world through the Cross, to Micklem 'Jesus and his Resurrection'--that is in so far as one can sum up whole theologies in a single phrase. Our polity said Dale is the consequence of great spiritual principles, in particular the immediate presence of Christ with his people, but where these principles were lacking Forsyth would gladly tolerate Gore's views on the Ministry than suffer the hollowness of a democratic club that recognised no authority of which it was not the source. Micklem

had no sentimental illusions about 'the Pope's men' but Rome was persecuted in Germany for her stand against Hitler and that summoned his courageous support. He accepted the experience behind the doctrine of transubstantiation which was what Dale preferred to call the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ. To these deep things polity was subordinate though not unimportant. Organisation and life, said Dale, were inextricably related. Peel did not like the word organisation. Calvin and Angell James had a dread of anarchy. Ganoczy, Roman Catholic, could understand the Radicals of the Reformation who wanted to make sure there was room in the Church for real personal experience of Christ.[1] The only question about Church order that really matters, says Micklem, is whether it permits Christ, and Him alone, to rule in His Church. What Calvin objected to most was the tyranny of the Papacy.

One problem in the Church is how to avoid tyrannical rule. Democracy in itself does not solve the problem for, as Forsyth so clearly saw, democracy can be a many headed monster. The real test of a Gospel Church is whether it will listen to an inspired minority. To aid this process Calvin, and much later Niebuhr, favoured some system of checks and balances. Forsyth, following Hatch, revived the idea of a mixed polity of which democracy was an essential part of the mixture. The idea goes back to Plato and Aristotle, and perhaps independently of

1 Alexandre Ganoczy in 'Word and Spirit in the Catholic Tradition' in Conflicts about the Holy Spirit, Concilium New York 1979, pp. 48-59. Ganoczy sees the Radicals of the Reformation as seeking to cope with a problem that is still with us, 'today's hunger for a personal experience of God'.

this classical tradition, was practised by the Dominicans. Was it they or Aristotle who instructed Calvin? Appropriately in Forsyth the concept of a mixed constitution for the whole Church is commended ecumenically. It is in this setting where so much of the noise is made by those who shout for Episcopacy or Primacy that the'Case for Democracy in the Church' should be heard. As we have listened the following points have been made:

ONE The Church of the Apostles had many democratic features.[1] The members probably shared in the election of officers and had a corporate responsibility for discipline and other decisions of the church. There may be doubts about details and disputes about individual texts but there is also some uncertainty about the origins of episcopacy. Democracy in Church government has as good a claim to be Apostolic as most other forms and this has been recognised by historians of many different traditions. Bearing in mind that we are dealing with very new and inexperienced Christians, the case for participation by more mature congregations becomes even stronger.

TWO Early Christian tradition at least to the time of Leo and Cyprian supports this interpretation of New Testament polity. Cyprian's stated policy was to consult the faithful, and in matters of doctrine Newman and Dale were agreed devout 'shepherds of Patterdale' had often proved more orthodox than their bishops. (Bellarmine misunderstood the traditional images of 'shepherd' and 'sheep'.) Much talk

1 This is a consensus-type statement that Dale, Forsyth, Peel and Micklem would approve. C.H.Dodd(Congregationalist) in Peel, editor, Essays Congregational and Catholic, London 1931, 'The Church in the New Testament', p.15 'We do not know exactly how any church of New Testament times was governed'. Congregationalism had Paul's approval, not perhaps James'. ibid, p. 16

about 'Catholic order' was, said Micklem, 'so much ballyhoo'. 'We need say no more than that St Cyprian would not have recognised the valid episcopacy of any bishop elected' on the terms on which Fisher had been elected to succeed William Temple.[1] 'The early Christian and catholic method of electing bishops has been preserved by the non-episcopal Churches and by them alone'. A bishop must be elected by his flock, with the approval of the wider Church.

THREE The 'Reformed tradition' gives the people, or their representatives, an essential part in the election of Church officers and in the government of the Church. This rediscovery of the laity belongs to other Reformation Churches. Luther thought 'congregationalism' the ideal polity but not workable at the time (Dale, Forsyth). The Anabaptist Radicals were the most consistent in evolving democratic polities(Forsyth, Peel). The'Reformed tradition'is not compatible with undemocratic forms, whether in Church or State (Micklem). The argument over Calvin will, no doubt, continue but it is agreed by many that historically the Genevan tradition via the English Independents, and possibly as an amalgam with Anabaptism, has been the most pro-democratic of all Church traditions. (James Hastings Nichols (Reformed), G.P.Gooch, A.D. Lindsay, G.D.H.Cole, Christopher Dawson) Recent research has shown that a number of Calvin's colleagues were very sympathetic towards democracy(Morély, Viret, Vermigli).

1 Micklem might still wish to make the same point today despite recent reforms in Crown appointments and wider consultation, sometimes involving other Churches, Councils of Churches etc., before a bishop is appointed. Earlier Congregationalists were accustomed to describing the minister of each local church as a 'bishop' and claimed NT precedent for so doing.

FOUR The experience of Congregationalists since the sixteenth century is that Church Meetings are a'means of grace'.[1] When those who are Christians meet together in His Name, Christ himself is present to invest their decisions with his authority. Here one encounters the Communion of Saints and experiences the Kingdom of Heaven (Dale's 'To be at Church Meeting... is quoted by Mackennal, Peel, Micklem, Huxtable and others). As a'means of grace', Church Meeting is seen as either an extension of the Lord's Supper or as preparation for it(Manual for Members at Carr's Lane, Jenkins; Rodborough Bede Book).

FIVE A democratic constitution encourages mutual ministry[2] where members may guide each other in difficult decisions (Peel), or contribute their knowledge on complex questions (Forsyth). It embodies the conviction that 'no man is more important than another in the eyes of God' (Micklem). It does not mean that one man's opinion is as good as another or that everything is to be decided by'squabbling amateurs, each shouting that he has as good a right to his opinion as the next man' (Forsyth).[3] Rather it means that all those who have experienced the Gospel will be able to discern what is consistent with the Gospel when they hear it.(Forsyth). John Robinson told the Pilgrim Fathers they should follow him no further than he followed Christ. (Dale and Peel).

1 See also the letter'To the Ministers of Christ's Holy Gospel in the Churches of the Congregational Order'(1939), referred to in the chapter on Micklem; The Box and the Puppets, pp. 93-9.

2 'Mutual ministry' is a phrase often used by the Churches of Christ which are now members of the United Reformed Church(1981). See William Robinson, The Administration of the Lord's Supper, Birmingham 1947, p. 16 where the phrase describes worship in the Churches of Christ.

3 The Principle of Authority (1913), London 1952, p. 81

SIX Truth can be discovered through discussion (John Milton, Peel, possibly; Rufus Jones, Ernest Barker, Micklem). All who may have some gift or insight should be able to share in the discussion.

(A QUESTION: What about the 'Priesthood of All Believers'? Why has this not been mentioned? The answer is that although it is sometimes used as an argument for Church democracy (Woodhouse, A.D.Lindsay and some discussions of the Levellers and their faith), it plays almost no part in the advocacy of Dale, Forsyth or Micklem. Albert Peel uses the 'priesthood of all believers' to justify lay celebration of communion rather than as an argument for a form of Church polity. [1] 'All believers' tended to mean 'each believer' and although this could be a democratic emphasis in that it attached importance to each participant, failure to think in corporate terms sapped the interest in corporate or Church assemblies. The 'priesthood of all believers' plays very little part in Calvin's theology and only became prominent in Congregationalist thinking in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. [2])

1 See Albert Peel's comments in CQ 1933, p.226; CQ 1938, p. 7 and CQ 1938, p. 137 where Peel criticises the Archbishops' Commission on doctrine for talking of 'the fundamental priesthood of the Church' as 'the priesthood of the whole Body', and then failing to concede the implications for lay celebration.

2 I owe this comment to an unpublished paper by Dr Geoffrey F Nuttall on'The Priesthood of All Believers '.
On Calvin see John R Crawford, 'Calvin and the Priesthood of all Believers', Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol. 21, No. 2, June 1968, pp. 145-156; John Whale, The Protestant Tradition, Cambridge 1955, p. 152.

SEVEN 'What touches all should be approved by all' (cited in Congar and,in modified form, part of the tradition of Leo cited by Calvin, Henry Jacob and John Owen). All members have an inalienable right to judge whether they are being ruled by the Word of God (Micklem). Democracy respects the freedom of the individual member (Peel).

EIGHT Democracy is one method of maintaining internal unity. Such a method must be monarchic, oligarchic or democratic. There is no warrant for rejecting democracy in the Church simply because it is human (Franks). The democratic method is best able to balance freedom and authority and is commended provided freedom is seen as a sense of higher obligation(Oman) and authority is both external and yet personal, and not merely the force of a group decision (Forsyth).

NINE Participation in decision making is educational (Rousseau, Mill, Cole; Dale, Peel, Barker, Micklem). It encourages maturity and schools the capacity for government(Roland Allen).

TEN Democracy in the Church can mean that the decisions made are best for all concerned for it offers the possibility of the widest representation of interests. At Carr's Lane, Birmingham, for example, who was best able to discern the 'mind of Christ' for that church? John Angell James with his long

experience as a pastor in one church, or the Church Meeting whose members would have to help implement any decision? Or was it better, and better for whom, that the members should on occasion, and only after very careful consideration, feel led to disagree with such an eminent minister as Dale? We know Dale's own verdict. He was proud of the commonality, as he called the unordained members of the People of God: 'a perfectly beautiful Church Meeting'.

That concludes the case for democracy in Church government.

One may imagine a truly ecumenical council in which a Reformed spokesman, drawing on the accumulated wisdom of his own tradition, stands up and makes such a case. He knows, of course, that his argument is vulnerable at many points, and not least of all in practice. But he also knows that other Church systems have their faults but are still commended. All Anglicans know that there have been, perhaps there still are, autocratic bishops who disrupt the life and mission of the Church but Reformed Churchmen are still urged to take episcopacy into their system and on the advice of Forsyth and Micklem and probably Calvin, should be prepared to do so. Only Forsyth did wish that Churchmen would not make rules out of these things. Let episcopacy commend itself by its merits. He would not say to others you must have Parochial Church Councils and Synods where your lay people may decide matters of doctrine. Nor

would he presume to object to the system of voting by 'Houses' though this is not considered Reformed Church practice, or when it has been, has earned the rebuke of a Jean Morély. As for the electioneering among candidates with rival programmes to put before Synod, all Dale might say is that you Anglicans did not learn this from us. But let us remember that Micklem and Manning had said that self-government is not something learnt in a hurry.

These points could be made in the cut and thrust of defence and counter attack. Somehow they seem out of place in ecumenical dialogue where all are penitent about past rivalries, and wish only to speak and hear the truth in love, and to be built into One Church, Catholic and Reformed.

Heartening to an English Nonconformist, and a reminder of the great ferment of debate and correspondence throughout Catholic Europe and beyond in which we once took part, is to learn of the Roman Catholic rediscovery of 'Calvinus Catholicus'. Karl Barth(Reformed) told his 'student' Hans Küng in 1966 how excited he was to have discovered'a Roman Catholic Calvin scholar (and friend), Alexandre Ganoczy.[1] Barth had read Calvin und Vatikanum II (1965) and agreed that Calvin would have welcomed many of the decrees of that Council. Barth and Küng, as is well known, had reached agreement on the fundamentals of the faith.[2] One Reformation debate could be happily resolved. Might the Church question be solved too?[3]

1 Karl Barth, Letters 1961-1968, ET, Geoffrey Bromiley, Edinburgh 1981, Letter 217, Basel, 27th June 1966, p. 214 Alexandre Ganoczy was Hans Küng's assistant.

2 Hans Küng, Justification (1957), reissued with new material, and Barth's response, ET London 1981

3 Colm O'Grady, The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth Two Volumes, London 1970. -a Roman Catholic dialogue with Karl Barth.

Participants in this study made two suggestions which are still worth exploring. The first was that the acceptance of different 'Orders' within the Catholic Church should be extended to embrace other denominations. The idea was advanced by William Temple and very seriously considered by Nathaniel Micklem. Within a more truly catholic Church there would be congregations, provinces etc., which were more democratically ordered than others. High levels of participation by all the members of churches, or their elected representatives, would be hoped for but not necessarily expected, or demanded, 'always and everywhere'. This would concede a genuine difficulty voiced by Karl Rahner for the Church of Rome.

Rahner has expressed a strong plea for 'a genuine process of democratisation in the Church'.[1] The motivation is not liberation from authority, or a criticism of the Church's hierarchy and teaching office. Rather it is for him a recognition that in today's complex and pluralist society, good decisions require the integration of a wide range of different voices. There has to be much greater dialogue within the Church.[2] The fundamentals of the faith are given - as Forsyth would be pleased to hear - but there is scope for discussion and voting on how best to formulate the faith and prevent misunderstandings. That the 'people of the Church

1 Karl Rahner S.J., Theological Investigations, Volume X, Writings 1965-67 (2), ET London 1973, p. 329.

2 ibid, pp. 103-121, 'Dialogue in the Church'.

should collaborate to a greater extent and more "democratically" even in the functions of the teaching office' cannot be ruled out as 'un-Catholic'. But there are very practical difficulties. Who are the Catholics who ought to be involved in such decisions?

> 'The present-day situation of the Church is one in which we are faced with the phenomena of individuals only partially identifying themselves with her.' [1]

Dale and others sought to solve this problem by an insistence that the members of the Christian Church should be Christians. Church Meeting accepted responsibility for disciplining its members. Peel talked of the 'keen people' and those'entirely consecrated to Christ'. Micklem was most unhappy about such apparent exclusiveness. He was prepared to use more 'catholic' definitions - all who had not repudiated their baptism.

There is also the criticism of Congregationalism once expressed by General Booth of the Salvation Army that Congregationalists were the most middle class of all English Churches. [2] Government by discussion may be much more congenial to professional people. On the other hand, Roland Allen argued that everybody was capable of self-government provided they were not expected to operate alien systems. Democracy remains a challenge to trades unions as well as to churches in more working class areas.

1 Karl Rahner S.J., Theological Investigations, Volume XII, ET London 1974, pp. 20-21.

2 Stephen Mayor, The Churches and the Labour Movement, . London 1967, pp 27-8.

The second suggestion was made by Peter Taylor Forsyth. It was that we should take up the classical concept of a mixed constitution of Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy and apply it to the Church ecumenically. The constitution of the Dominicans embodied this mixed polity within an Order of the Catholic Church. The Conciliarists had considered its wider application. It was implicit in the teaching of Calvin, and reinterpreted by others in the Reformed tradition in such a way as to reserve the position of Monarch for Christ's direct rule in the Church and each local congregation. Ecumenically it has been significant in this study that two men of Dissenting background, Ernest Barker and Nathaniel Micklem, found themselves drawn in different ways towards the Dominicans and their practice of representative democracy. Aquinas, on whom Micklem was something of an expert, was a Dominican and one of the early advocates of democracy in the state.[1]

In recent Church unity discussions some attempt has been made to commend with equal emphasis episcopal, presbyteral and congregational/lay roles. The attempt is not always successful. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982)[2] begins its section on Ministry with 'The Calling of the whole People of God' but hurries on to discuss at much greater length the

1 G.P.Gooch, English Democratic Ideas in the Seventeenth Century, second edition, Cambridge 1927, p. 18. Aquinas suggested that all offices be filled by popular choice.

2 Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper, Number 111, World Council of Churches, Geneva 1982. This document, sometimes known as the Lima text, expresses the agreement of representatives of most Confessions, including the Roman Catholics. In 1983-4 denominations are asked to send in their considered responses.

See also the discussions in England on the 'Ten Propositions' and Towards Visible Unity: Proposals for a Covenant, Churches Council for Covenanting, London 1980 esp. pp. 15, 71

ordained ministries of bishops, presbyters and deacons. Nonetheless it is clearly stated as an ecumenically agreed conviction that:

> 'Strong emphasis should be placed on the active participation of all members in the life and decision making of the community'. [1]

On this one point Dale, Forsyth, Peel and Micklem were unanimous. My hope is that in our ecumenical search for One Church, Catholic and Reformed, which holds in balance Democracy and other forms of government, we shall remember what Forsyth also said: that in our decisions we include the dead as well as the living.

For Leo, Cyprian, Calvin, Morely, Bellarmine, Owen, Dale, Hatch, Gore, Forsyth, Oman, Temple, Micklem, Peel, Congar and Allen and the great commonality of the Church Catholic in all places, we who share responsibility within the one People of God remain deeply indebted. In one way or another they all, and others, stimulated a debate about democracy in Church government which is still going on. The case is adjourned.....

1 Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (1982), 'Ministry', paragraph 27.

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